

Key facts about rodent and stoat eradication in the eastern Bay of Islands

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Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai
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How it is happening

The Department of Conservation's Bay of Islands Area Office plans to eradicate all rodents (rats and mice) and stoats from all of the islands in the chain from Motuarohia (Robertson Island) eastwards including Moturua, Motukiekie, Okahu, Waewaetorea, Urupukapuka, Poroporo, and all their associated islets. (see map)

Pestoff 20R cereal bait, containing brodifacoum (0.02gm/kg) for rodent eradication will be applied from the air using helicopters with underslung buckets and laid by hand in structures and caves. The poison baits are cereal pellets about 2cm long, cylinder shaped and dyed green. Stoats will be removed by ground-trapping.

Timeframe

Bait laying will begin in the first period of favourable weather between 1 June to 30 October 2009. The Department of Conservation (DOC) will contact all island landowners, occupiers and tour operators and place warning signs immediately prior to the operation starting.

The operation is weather dependent requiring three fine nights, with two separate drops at least two weeks apart.

Important information

The pesticides we use are poisonous to humans and domestic animals. Poisoning can occur through eating baits or poisoned animals. Pesticides remain in carcasses until they have rotted and this is a threat to dogs.

These risks can be eliminated by following these simple rules:

Watch children at all times

Do not touch the bait

Remember, poison baits or carcasses are DEADLY to DOGS

Island landowners and caretakers are advised to remove all cats and dogs from the islands for up to four months post the second application of bait. The department will advise when it's safe for them to return.

Contamination of shellfish has not been recorded in previous operations, but as a precaution please avoid taking seafood from within 100m of MHW of the islands for a period of 30 days after each bait application.

Patukeha and Ngati Kuta (the resident hapu at Te Rawhiti Rakaumangamanga) will place a rahui (temporary closure) on the taking of kaimoana (all fish and shellfish) within this 100m zone for 30 days after each of these applications.



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Observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about pesticides. Warning signs indicate that pesticide residues may still be present in baits or animals. When signs are removed, this means that you can resume normal activities in the area. Please report suspected vandalism or unauthorised removal of signs. If in doubt, check with DOC.

Reserve closures

The following island reserves will be closed to the public for at least two days during each application of bait (day of and day following). Boats are asked to stay clear of the islands during the day of the operation.

Motuarohia Recreation Reserve
Moturua Scenic Reserve
Poroporo Scenic Reserve
Urupukapuka Recreation Reserve
Waewaetorea Recreation Reserve
Okahu Recreation Reserve

Camping grounds on Urupukapuka and Moturua Islands will be closed for at least two months from 24th May.

Why we are eradicating rodents and stoats

The islands are an iconic destination for New Zealand and international visitors. These scenic landscapes are rich in history and should be complemented by healthy island ecosystems. Currently this is not possible because rats and stoats eat everything from seeds, birds' eggs, chicks, and insects to lizards. Project Island Song is a community initiative with the vision of an archipelago of islands rich in native flora and fauna for all to enjoy. The Guardians of the Bay of islands, a voluntary community group, and Patukeha and Ngati Kuta, resident hapu from Rawhiti are working with the Department of Conservation to achieve this.

Why we are using this method

The use of poison baits is the only proven way to remove rodents from islands. Trapping generally fails to remove rodents because it is difficult to work in steep terrain and trap-shy animals survive to repopulate the island. This type of operation is a standard procedure and has been used to successfully eradicate rodents from around 100 islands in NZ.

Brodifacoum

It's an anticoagulant poison that is widely used for rodent control, it affects the blood clotting system

Brodifacoum is almost insoluble in water and therefore has not been detected in freshwater systems e.g. in streams after other drops at Little Barrier and Maungatautari

There are no incidents recorded where human health has been affected as a result of similar operations

The health of the marine environment has not been affected as shown in studies undertaken before and after operations (e.g. reef fish studies at Kapiti)

It was not detected in kaimoana - mussels and scallops after the Hauturu - Little Barrier operation

Brodifacoum is not considered to be toxic to invertebrates as they have different blood clotting systems from vertebrate animals.

Some birds will die at the time of the proposed bait application. Brodifacoum does not affect populations of native species which undergo large increases two years after a drop in the absence of rats

There are many documented cases of increases in bird, lizard and insect populations on offshore islands post brodifacoum use e.g. Tiritiri Matangi, Motuihe and Hauturu

Operational planning

The use of this pesticide requires the consent of the Medical Officer of Health, and resource consent from the regional council.

The Department of Conservation assesses and approves the all vertebrate pesticide operations on public conservation land on behalf of the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA), following procedures approved by ERMA. DOC approving managers apply conditions to ensure that all legal and policy requirements are met, and that any potential risks of the operation are managed.

To apply for these consents, a detailed assessment of the risks involved in the work was completed. This is called an *Assessment of Environmental Effects* and if you're interested, a copy for this operation can be obtained from your local DOC office. Consent approvers usually impose conditions on the operation to further safeguard the public and the environment.

We consulted people most affected by this operation prior to finalising the operational detail. This involved considering their concerns and needs regarding the operational method and its timing. We have notified other people using this fact sheet.

If you suspect poisoning

Contact:

- Your local doctor or
- Local hospital or
- National Poisons Centre: 0800 764 766 (urgent calls) or 03 479 7248 (non-urgent and general enquiries), or dial 111
- Vitamin K is an antidote for brodifacoum and we have advised local vets of the operation to ensure they have it in stock.

For more information

Adrian Walker, Project Manager,
Bay of Islands Area Office,
P O Box 128, 34 Landing Rd, Kerikeri 0230

Phone 09 407 0300

Please get in touch with Adrian if you want to be notified again prior to the operation.

***Pesticide
Operational
Area***

Ipipiri - islands in the eastern Bay of Islands

