

28 July 2022

[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email to [REDACTED] of 5 July regarding the Department of Conservation's predator control operations. Your correspondence has been referred to me for response, as the Director responsible for DOC's National Predator Control Programme.

A decision has recently been made to remove our Eglinton and Makarora operations from this year's programme as rodent populations are not currently high enough to warrant control. Our website has been updated to reflect those changes:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/national-predator-control-programme/operations/>

Each year, we set our operational programme based on a number of prioritisation factors including available resources, the required repeat intervals for each site and the beech mast forecast. It was predicted that the Fiordland area would have a [beech mast this year](#), and predator control operations were planned accordingly. However, the beech mast has not occurred as anticipated, and based on rodent monitoring results we have been able to defer and cancel operations in that area.

It is estimated that there are between 3,000 and 7,000 kea remaining in New Zealand. Estimating kea population size is difficult because they have an extensive range across rugged terrain (4 million hectares of the South Island), and because of the cryptic behaviour of adults and flocking behaviour of juveniles.

DOC has been using aerial 1080 in the Eglinton Valley since 2014, and in Makarora since 2017. There is a range of research on 1080 and predator population dynamics – as a starting point, you may be interested in [Kemp et al 2022 Population dynamics of invasive carnivores and prey populations, and predator control, affect kea survivorship across the Southern Alps](#), which also references several other pieces of applicable research.

Regarding your request to attend and film an operation, we generally do not permit this for health and safety reasons. If you wish to understand what an aerial operation looks like, you can view footage in TBfree New Zealand's video [1080 Science: How and why 1080 poison is used in New Zealand](#).

Nāku noa, nā

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Hilary Aikman
Director Operations Issues and Programmes
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai