

23 March 2023

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 25 February 2023 in which you asked for:

*Copies of all log notes, emails or requests for service regarding bed bugs or other communicable parasites (such as lice, scabies or fleas) in DOC property south of the Waitaki river since 1/June/2022*

*Please include a list of the number of complaints or requests for service from the public regarding said parasites for this time period, broken down by area, month and type of parasite identified or suspected*

Bed bugs and other parasitic bugs are an unwelcome, but thankfully, uncommon problem across most of our network of huts. DOC mattresses have a plastic lining, which makes them less appealing to bugs, and easy to clean. However, like any accommodation, we are not immune and we actively encourage hikers to let us know as soon as possible if they suspect they've been bitten by a bed bug.

Where we have confirmed reports of bedbugs, we work quickly to treat the hut/s and advise hikers of the issue, along with offering refunds for those who choose to cancel their Great Walk bookings.

We also work with accommodation providers to share reports of bed bugs, and in some cases, pre-emptively treat huts to stop a problem, before it becomes a problem. In 2021, North Arm Hut on Rakiura needed to be treated multiple times, and ultimately relined, to get on top of a bed bug infestation.

Above all, hikers and other hut users need to be vigilant and check their tramping gear before, during and after any hike and thoroughly clean and air out gear between uses.

You will see in our response that there have been several instances where we have been alerted to a possible presence of bedbugs in DOC properties south of the Waitaki river since

1 June 2022. However, upon examination, no bed bugs were found. We continue to regularly inspect and treat these huts.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *Copies of all log notes, emails or requests for service regarding bed bugs or other communicable parasites (such as lice, scabies or fleas) in DOC property south of the Waitaki river since 1/June/2022*

The requested documentation relating to bed bugs is attached. For further information please refer to Table 1 – Schedule of Documents on page 4 of this response.

There have been no log notes, emails or requests for service regarding other communicable parasites (such as lice, scabies or fleas) in DOC property south of the Waitaki river since 1 June 2022.

2. *Please include a list of the number of complaints or requests for service from the public regarding said parasites for this time period, broken down by area, month and type of parasite identified or suspected*

Area	Month	Type of parasite identified/suspected
Te Anau	January 2023	Duck itch suspected.
Rakiura	February 2023	Bedbugs found at Rakiura accommodation provider. None found at suspected DOC properties.
Rakiura	February 2023	Bedbugs found at Rakiura accommodation provider. None found at suspected DOC properties.
Te Anau	February 2023	Bedbugs found at Rakiura accommodation provider. Traveller had previously been on Routeburn Track. None found at suspected DOC properties.

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents listed above, subject to information being withheld under one or more of the following sections of the Official Information Act, as applicable:

- personal contact details of officials, under section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people;
- commercially sensitive information, under section 9(2)(b)(ii) – to protect the commercial position of the person who supplied the information, or who is the subject of the information.



In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Official Information Act and determined there are no public interests which outweigh the grounds for withholding.

Information that is outside of the specified date range scope of your request has been removed from the documents.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and enclosed documents may be published on the Department's website.

Nāku noa, nā



Aaron Fleming  
Regional Operations Director, Southern South Island  
Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*



**Table 1 - Schedule of documents**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Document description</b>	<b>Decision</b>
1	N/A	Bedbugs Timeline	Released in part
2	7 June 2022	Email from accommodation provider to Dale Chittenden	Released in part
3	5 September 2022	Email from Dale Chittenden regarding bed bug treatments	Released in part
4	20 September 2022	Email from Dale Chittenden advising bed bug treatment on Rakiura Track.	Released in part
5	18 January 2023	Email correspondence between Pania Dalley and Kepler Track visitor	Released in part
6	23 February 2023	Email correspondence between Pania Dalley and Dale Chittenden regarding Rakiura and Fiordland visitors	Released in part