OSPRI

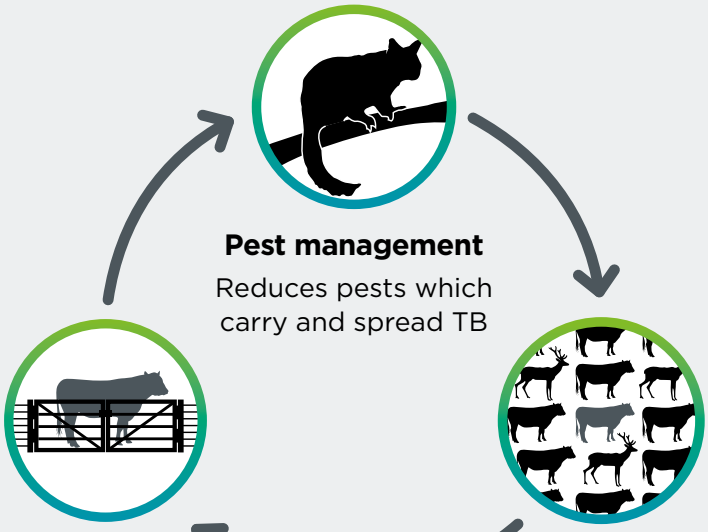
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Southern Tararua and Project Kaka bovine TB control operation

OSPRI's TBfree programme

The TBfree programme aims to manage and eventually eradicate bovine tuberculosis (TB) from New Zealand's farmed cattle and deer and wild animal populations. Controlling disease prevents livestock production losses and protects the world leading reputation of New Zealand's dairy, beef and deer products. We use possum control, along with regular herd testing and movement restrictions, to achieve our eradication goals. Information gathered from wild animal surveys, recent and historic findings of TB in wild animals, herd testing results and the operational history of the region are used when planning operations.

How we control TB



Targeting possums

We're proposing a possum control operation in the Southern Taraura area (please see the map provided) covering approximately 27,625 hectares.

To control the spread of bovine TB, possum numbers need to be kept extremely low (around one to two animals every 10 hectares) for at least five years. Further control work is needed in the Southern Tararua area to reduce the possum population and minimise the risk of the disease spreading through wild animal populations and onto farmed cattle and deer. Possum control has dramatically reduced the number of infected herds in the Southern North Island region.

What to expect from the operation

The proposed operation will begin with the distribution of non-toxic, tan-coloured cereal pellets by helicopter. This "pre-feed" gives possums a taste for the pellets and overcomes bait shyness. One to two weeks later, toxic, green cereal pellets – each containing

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0.15 percent biodegradable sodium fluoroacetate (also known as 1080) – will be applied by helicopter at a rate of two kilograms per hectare. That's about one bait to every 60 square metres. The Southern Taraura operation will be subject to strict safety, quality-assurance and monitoring requirements.

Advanced GPS navigational equipment will be used to ensure the pellets are accurately placed and exclusion zones avoided.

We intend to use deer repellent on baits, where consent conditions allow, to reduce unintended by-kill within deer populations.

The method

The vast majority of possum control in the region is done by local contractors using ground-based traps and hand-laid toxins. The remaining, far smaller area is controlled using aerially applied pellets containing biodegradable 1080. Aerial control is efficient, cost effective and has been extremely successful at reducing possum numbers down to very low levels in the past. It is preferred in areas like Southern Taraura due to the rugged nature of the terrain. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment also supports aerial control. The commissioner completed an extensive review into the use of 1080, in which she strongly endorsed its continued use in New Zealand. Please visit pce.parliament.nz to read this report.

What happens now?

This operation is proposed to commence from February/March 2026 with Ecofx doing the work on behalf of OSPRI's TBfree programme. Before the operation, affected landowners and occupiers will be contacted and visited by this contractor. They will discuss boundary issues, water supply safety and the management of any risks to dogs and livestock.

Consents from the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Health are required for this operation. Affected landowners and occupiers will be contacted again before the operation starts, notices will be published in local newspapers and warning signs will be placed at all likely access points to the operational area.

Biodiversity benefits

The operation will have additional conservation benefits for native birds and bush. Possums eat the forest canopy and prey on native birdlife, including eggs and chicks. Biodegradable 1080 is also extremely effective at controlling other introduced predators such as ship rats and stoats.

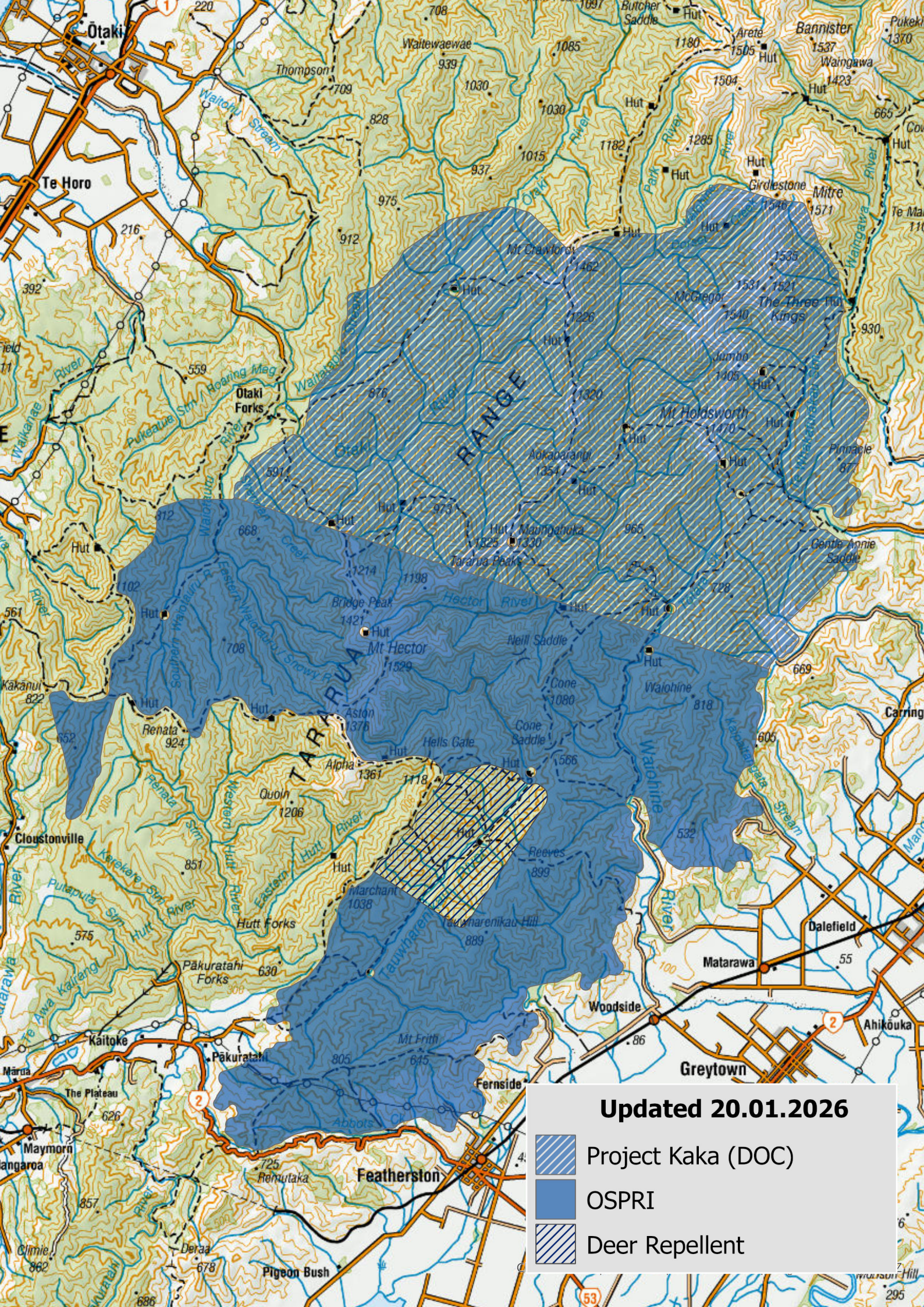
Updated 20.01.2026
Project Kaka (DOC)
OSPRI
Deer Repellent
TARARUA RANGE
Mt Hector
Mt Holdsworth
Mt Crawford
Tararua Peaks
Bridge Peak
Hector River
Otaki River
Waiohine River
Hutt River
Otaki Forks
Hutt Forks
Pākuratahi Forks
Te Horo
Ōtaki
Cloustonville
Kaitoke
Pākuratahi
Maymorn
Featherston
Greytown
Woodside
Matarawa
Dalefield
Ahikōuka
Fernside
Pigeon Bush
Carring
Bannister
Girdlestone
Mitre
The Three Kings
McGregor
Jumbo
Pinnacle
Gentle Annie Saddle
Neill Saddle
Cone
Cone Saddle
Hells Gate
Aston
Alpha
Quoin
Renata
Reeves
Marchant
Tauwharenikau Hill
Mt Frith
Remutaka
Deraa
Climie
The Plateau
Waitewaewae
Thompson
Butcher Saddle
Arete
Waingawa
Waitohu Stream
Roaring Meg
Pukeatua Stm
Waikanae River
Kākānui
Kārapa
Abbots Ck
Tauwharenikau River
Kaipaitangata Stream
Kerekere Stm
Putaputa Stm
Te Awa Kairangi
Western Hutt River
Eastern Hutt River
Southern Waiotauru R
Eastern Waiotauru R
Snowy R
Waiotauru River
Waitarapu Stream
Park River
Dorset Creek
Waiohine Creek
Totara Ck
Wharekawakawa Stm
Waingawa River
Pukekl
Te Mar
Cou
Mangaroa
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Photo: © Richard Ashurst

Benefits of collaboration between OSPRI and DOC

Goal 1: Targeting possums to eradicate TB

Reducing and keeping the possum population low reduces the risk of TB being spread.

OSPRI's TBfree programme uses possum control along with regular herd testing and movement restrictions to achieve bovine TB eradication goals. Information from wild animal surveys, recent and historic findings of TB in wild animals, herd testing results and the operational history of the region are used when planning operations.

TB eradication goals are:

- TB freedom in cattle and deer herds by 2026
- TB freedom in possums by 2040
- TB freedom in all wildlife by 2055

TB history in the Tararua Range

TB has been found in the wildlife on the eastern side of the range from Mt Bruce to Mikimiki Crown and on the western side from Otaki Forks to Holdsworth campground. This is an area covering 27,625 hectares in the Northern Tararua.

There has been no control in the central sections of this TB management.

The last infected herd was in 2003 in the western Taraura section of the range.

Goal 2: Protecting native species through predator control in Tararua Forest Park

Project Kākā

The Tararua range is home to the iconic kākā, korimako, kākāriki, titipounamu, bats/pekapeka and other native birds. The native tree fuchsia is also present.

Photo: © DOC

Project Kaka, DOC's proposed area for predator control, is at the Northern end of OSPRI's TB Management Area in the Southern Tararua.

DOC has controlled possums, rats, stoats and goats in the area to protect native fauna and flora against browsing and predation every three years since 2011 and prior to that at six-to-seven-year intervals.

Predator control works

By knocking the predator population down and keeping numbers low, the native species in the area are able to regenerate.

Intensive monitoring by DOC, OSPRI, Manaaki Whenua-Landcare Research and Greater Wellington Regional Council has shown significant drops in predator numbers after each aerial 1080 operation and increasing populations of native bird species. Monitoring of plants such as the tree fuchsia clearly shows survival is far better in areas that have had predator control.

Possums, rats and stoats increase dramatically after mast years which impacts on native wildlife as well as greater numbers of possums increases the chance of TB spreading.

Important information

Warning signs will be placed at all main access points to the operational area. Everyone must follow the cautions on the signs. There's no health risk when using this area as long as you follow these instructions:

Do not handle any bait or allow children to wander unsupervised. Cereal baits containing 1080 are dyed green.

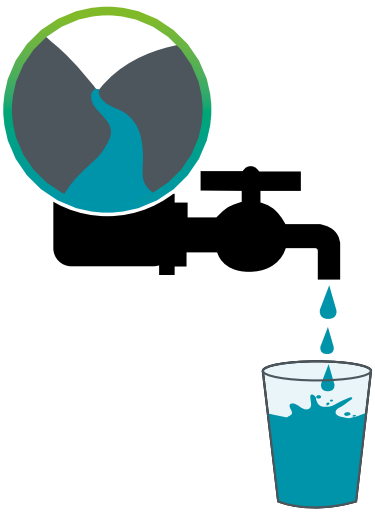
Do not hunt or take game from within a two-kilometre radius of the operational area for human or pet consumption. It's an offence to sell meat products that have been exposed to 1080. Hunting can resume approximately four months following the control work.

Please observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about the pesticide. Warning signs indicate that pesticide residues may still be present in the baits or carcasses. When the signs are officially removed, you can resume normal activities in the area.

Do not bring dogs into the area until the warning signs have been officially removed.

Dogs are particularly susceptible to 1080. They must not be allowed access to bait or poisoned carcasses which remain toxic to dogs until they have fully decomposed.

Free dog muzzles will be provided on request. Please contact OSPRI or the contractor to obtain a muzzle.



There is no risk to public drinking water

Biodegradable 1080 is highly soluble and does not persist in water or soil. Local health authorities apply strict conditions to aerial operations so that drinking water supplies are not contaminated. Safety has been confirmed by tests on several thousand water samples taken after aerial 1080 operations over many years.

What to do if you suspect poisoning

Contact your local hospital or doctor, or **dial 111**

National Poisons Centre
0800 POISON (764 766)

If a domestic animal is poisoned, contact a local veterinarian.

Further information

OSPRI

Palmerston North Office
P 06 353 2710
E vector.sni@ospri.co.nz
W ospri.co.nz

Contractor

EcoFX
P 07 873 8130
E ecofx-office-nz@rentokil-initial.com

Links

- Controlling bovine TB and how and why 1080 is used in New Zealand: ospri.co.nz/tb-and-pest-control
- Recreational hunting, 'TB Information for Hunters' factsheet: ospri.co.nz
- Commercial hunting: Ministry for Primary Industries and Department of Conservation websites.
- Information on DOC use of 1080: doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/methods-of-control/1080