Key facts about possum and rat control in the Horowhenua Operational Area

The Department of Conservation’s Manawatu Rangitikei Area Office is continuing possum and rat control in Koputaroa Scientific Reserve (refer to map attached).

How it is happening

Because the Department of Conservation (DOC) sets limits on the period can use certain pesticides continually in an area. We are going to change from the toxin brodifacoum to two new toxins.

Possum Control

The pesticide used for possum control has the brand name Feracol (cholecalciferol). It will be placed out throughout the reserve using “strikers” which are a biodegradable potato starch bait station with a highly palatable feed paste with the active ingredient cholecalciferol added. These will be stapled to trees approximately 1m from the ground along current bait station lines.

Rat Control

The pesticide used to control rats in the area is diphacinone (brand name Pestoff Rodent Bait 50D). These are cereal based pellets approximately 10mm in diameter and dyed blue. 0.5kg – 1 kg of bait will be placed in existing bait stations every 3 months. Cholecalciferol is also toxic to rats and may also have an impact on the rat numbers.

Timeframe

This will be an ongoing operation and warning signs for the new toxins will be placed out immediately prior to the operation starting. Because of the residual effects of brodifacoum, (the old toxin), the old warning signs will remain in place for 36 months from the last application date.

Important information

The pesticides, cholecalciferol and diphacinone are poisonous to humans and domestic animals. Poisoning can occur through handling or eating the bait, or consuming dead or poisoned animals. Treat all baits as poisonous, and keep domestic pets out of the operational area.

Animal carcasses will remain poisonous until they have decomposed. There is no health risk associated with using this area provided the following rules are observed:

- DO NOT handle any bait
- DO NOT allow CHILDREN to wander unsupervised
- DO NOT bring dogs into this area.
- DO NOT handle or eat ANIMALS from this area. (includes buffer zones in following table)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Within buffer</th>
<th>Pesticide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>2km</td>
<td>Any except cyanide or cholecalciferol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabbits</td>
<td>200m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hares, Wallabies or Live Possums</td>
<td>1km</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deer or any other wild animal</td>
<td>2km</td>
<td>Any except cyanide or cholecalciferol</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The presence of warning signs indicates that pesticide residues may still be present in baits or animals. The removal of signs will tell you that you can resume normal activities in the area. If in doubt, check with DOC.

**Why we are controlling possums and rats**

Possums and rats affect the health of native ecosystems. They eat seeds and seedlings, impact on forest regeneration, compete with native wildlife for food and prey on birds, eggs and invertebrates. Possum and rodent control improves habitat and decreases predation on native wildlife. This area contains threatened native species which are vulnerable to predation from possums and rats, and control of these predators will significantly benefit these threatened species. We plan to carry out ongoing control to ensure this significant area remains healthy.

**Why we are using this method**

We have found poison bait to be an extremely effective form of possum and rat control at this site.

When used appropriately feracol and pestoff rodent bait are effective toxins for keeping possums and rats at low levels.

Because we are switching to new toxins we will be continuing to monitor pest numbers to make sure we are achieving our target goals.

**Operational planning**

The use of these pesticides requires the Department of Conservations internal approval process to be met. This ensures the operation meets our Quality Management Standards for pesticide use.

This approval entails a detailed assessment of risks involved with the operation. The document produced is called an Assessment of Environmental Effects, and a copy for this operation can be obtained from the DOC office in Palmerston North.

**If you suspect poisoning**

Contact the National Poisons Centre
Tel 0800 764 766 (0800 POISON)
Or dial 111 and request an ambulance

In the case of a domestic animal being poisoned contact a local veterinary service.

**For more information**

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