

1 April 2025

Conservation House
Wellington, 6011
doc.govt.nz

Ref: OIAD-4980

Tēnā koe

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 05 March 2025. You enquired about the Department's Catlins aerial 1080 operation, which was completed on 13 March. The operation was primarily to protect a nationally significant population of mohua (yellowhead), which are extremely vulnerable to rat and stoat predation.

I understand that local staff have already responded to your request verbally, shortly after you made your enquiry. This letter is to follow up in writing with answers to your questions. You asked for:

"Can you please advise:

- How DoC has ensured that any poison to be laid prior to the DoC administered ballot period will not pose any health risk to hunters allocated blocks during this period, including any risks associated with consuming meat harvested from the area.*
- How long after 1080 operations it is safe to harvest and consume meat from the ballot area, which overlaps with the poisoned area.*
- Whether minister Potaka is aware of the operation (as it relates to the peak hunting period and accordingly has a much higher chance of harm than a 'usual' poisoning operation) in an area that DoC issued hunting permits for and any comments he may wish to make around the wisdom of this.*
- How DoC expect that hunters who have been allocated blocks in the area would be made aware of the poisoning operations, especially given that issuance of a hunting block suggests that they could reasonably expect to be able to safely hunt and recover meat for human consumption.*
- When, if ever, DoC has conducted poison laying this close to the roar period in any areas of New Zealand, and if not, why.*
- Whether Doc believes it would be safer for the community, to delay the poisoning operation until after the roar period.*
- How many blocks (and therefore hunting groups) ballot results indicate will be hunting this area during the roar period."*

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982.
Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *How DoC has ensured that any poison to be laid prior to the DoC administered ballot period will not pose any health risk to hunters allocated blocks during this period, including any risks associated with consuming meat harvested from the area.*

DOC applied for and received a Public Health Permission from the Ministry of Health (as a legal requirement of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 for the use of 1080) and a DOC permission (as a legal requirement of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996, Wildlife Act 1953, Reserves Act 1977) which includes conditions to be met to minimise risk to public health from aerial application of 1080. DOC also installs warning signage at all huts and access points to the block, as required by Worksafe NZ. DOC issues a 24hr notification to all relevant iwi, stakeholders (including the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association (NZDA)), occupying and adjoining landowners, and concessionaires. The DOC pesticide summary is up to date with status of all 1080 operations in the country, including 'will be laid' and proposed operations timing. There is an alert about the 1080 operation on all DOC websites related to the Beresford range, including the Catlins-Maclennan hunting block page.

2. *How long after 1080 operations it is safe to harvest and consume meat from the ballot area, which overlaps with the poisoned area.*

The caution period for the operation in the Catlins is estimated to be 9 months after the toxic application. The minimum requirement is 4 months. DOC will monitor possum carcasses and pellets, put in cages in the block, after the toxic application. After 4 months have passed, DOC will check them monthly until the pellets have gone and the carcasses are at a safe point. DOC will then end the caution period, considering it safe to for example to bring dogs into the block.

3. *Whether minister Potaka is aware of the operation (as it relates to the peak hunting period and accordingly has a much higher chance of harm than a 'usual' poisoning operation) in an area that DoC issued hunting permits for and any comments he may wish to make around the wisdom of this.*

The Minister of Conservation was informed that DOC made the operational decision to trigger an aerial 1080 operation in the Catlins, and that this would affect hunting opportunities during the roar.

4. *How DoC expect that hunters who have been allocated blocks in the area would be made aware of the poisoning operations, especially given that issuance of a hunting block suggests that they could reasonably expect to be able to safely hunt and recover meat for human consumption.*

Hunters are still able to 'trophy' hunt directly after the toxic application, but should not eat meat until the caution period has been lifted. Every year DOC National Predator Control Programme

managers meet with the national NZDA team (last year this occurred on 30/08/24) about where 1080 operations would be in the coming year. We reached out to local NZDA groups (South Otago, Gore, Dunedin, Southland) via email on 23/09/24 to ask if they would like further details about the Beresford operation or to discuss any effects of the proposal. We subsequently met in person with the Gore President and spoke over the phone with the South Otago representative.

DOC has also met with landowners that provide access to hunters and discussed how this operation affects them and what conversations they are having with hunters. An alert about the 1080 operation being planned for early March was put out on 14/10/24 on all DOC websites related to the Beresford range, including Catlins-Maclennan hunting block page (where you download the application form for a ballot block). DOC updated the Invercargill administrative staff, who take applications and allocate blocks for the Roar, on timing of the operation.

Please note that a special condition of the ballot block hunting permit is to contact DOC for pesticide updates.

5. *When, if ever, DoC has conducted poison laying this close to the roar period in any areas of New Zealand, and if not, why.*

If possible, DOC avoids triggering aerial 1080 operations during the roar, to avoid impacting hunters. In some cases that is not possible, due to the urgent need to protect threatened wildlife from predators during autumn.

Of the 22 DOC aerial 1080 operations currently scheduled in 2025, two may occur during the roar (Catlins and Ruahine). The Catlins operation is an urgent response to unexpectedly high rat numbers detected in late 2024 at a nationally significant site for mohua (yellowhead). Mohua are extremely vulnerable to rat and stoat predation. DOC is in dialogue with the NZDA about the Northern Ruahine operation, which will protect whio, kiwi, long tailed bats and Powelliphanta marchanti, a unique, carnivorous land snail, who's stronghold is in northern Ruahine. The operation is now urgent, as it has been repeatedly delayed by bad weather. We are attempting to deliver the operation by utilising more settled weather over autumn, while minimising the impact on hunters if possible.

In 2024, the following operations occurred between Christmas and March, mostly in response to the beech mast that occurred across New Zealand in 2023.

Date	Place
30/01/2024	Landsborough
11/02/2024	Eglinton
11/02/2024	Kahurangi - Parapara
21/02/2024	Arthur's Pass East
21/02/2024	Kahurangi - Kakapo
9/03/2024	Dart-Caples
9/03/2024	Kahurangi-Cobb
23/04/2024	Raukūmara Pae Maunga - Block 2C
27/04/2024	Makarora

6. *Whether Doc believes it would be safer for the community, to delay the poisoning operation until after the roar period.*

DOC makes every effort to minimise disruption to hunting and recreation. While the timing may not be ideal, it's important to note that the driver is ecological; this is one of the few remaining strongholds of mohua within their natural range; untreated predator plagues after mast events of the type we are seeing could wipe out this species locally. Constraints around weather and logistics also have a large effect on timing of operations.

7. *How many blocks (and therefore hunting groups) ballot results indicate will be hunting this area during the roar period*

There are 11 blocks in the Catlins-Maclennan hunting area . There are a maximum of 4 hunters per block. Blocks are allocated for a 2-3-day period = 440 people max.

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) may be published on the Department's website.

Nāku noa, nā



Ben Reddiex
Director National Programmes
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai