



24 January 2025

[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 05 December 2024, regarding the recent outbreak of avian influenza in Otago and DOC's avian influenza vaccine trial. You asked for:

"I am writing to inquire about the specific facilities used for the recent vaccine trials conducted on native bird species in New Zealand. Additionally, I would like to understand the measures that were implemented to ensure that no wild birds were affected during these trials.

Given the recent outbreak of Avian Influenza in Otago, it is crucial to clarify whether any potential risks arose from the vaccine trial itself. Previous studies have indicated that vaccinated birds can shed the virus, which raises concerns about the inadvertent spread of avian influenza to wild populations. For example, research has shown that live attenuated vaccines can lead to viral shedding in vaccinated birds, potentially facilitating transmission to unvaccinated flocks if biosecurity measures are not strictly adhered to.

Understanding the protocols in place during the trial will help address concerns regarding the safety and impact of the vaccination process on surrounding wildlife."

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982.

The information that you requested on the facilities and measures involved in the vaccination trial is contained in the animal ethics committee applications that were submitted at the start of the trial. These are listed in the table below.

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) granted approval for DOC to use the Poulvac Flufend RG vaccine in a controlled trial to test its safety and efficacy in a select number of endangered native birds. The vaccine contains inactivated (dead) virus that cannot cause a bird flu infection. It has been shown to be safe and effective in zoos in Europe. We hope this information alleviates your concerns around the avian influenza vaccine trial.

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	24 October 2023	Animal ethics committee applications for avian influenza vaccine trial in native species	Released in part

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents listed above, subject to information being withheld under the following section 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.

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 that outweigh the grounds for withholding.

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

Nāku noa, nā



Hilary Aikman
 Director Terrestrial Biodiversity
 Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai