

22 December 2022

TO: Emma Kearney  
s9(2)(a)  
s9(2)(a)

Cc: Nick Kelly  
Kiwi Recovery Group  
Matt Barnett

FROM: Emily King for the Kiwi Recovery Group

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**SUBJECT: Reconsideration of sourcing kiwi from Ponui to Waiheke**

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Dear Emma, s9(2)(a) and s9(2)(a),

The Kiwi Recovery Group previously provided advice for translocating kiwi to Waiheke, where Coromandel brown kiwi were recommended to be considered as a source site, rather than Ponui. However, Save the Kiwi have requested the Kiwi Recovery Group provide advice on releasing Ponui hybrid birds to Waiheke, as there is insufficient support from the Coromandel community to progress a translocation of Coromandel brown kiwi. Feedback from the Recovery Group is summarised below.

### Summary

The Kiwi Recovery Group continues to see potential for Waiheke to hold a sustainable population of kiwi, starting with Te Matuku Peninsula, provided mana whenua are in support.

Since there does not appear to be a willing source site in the Coromandel, we do not object to sourcing kiwi from Ponui and recommend the following:

- Where possible individuals of the lowest relatedness are selected as founders.
- The natural process regarding density impacts of a closed population are socialised early with the Waiheke community to manage expectations.
- The Waiheke population, if successful, does not contribute to recovery programmes elsewhere.

The risks to kiwi on Waiheke and the associated recommendations from the Kiwi Recovery Group remain, particularly regarding dogs, traffic, and subdivision development, as outlined in the previous advice paper.

This technical advice does not incorporate iwi or te ao Māori perspectives, as these will be part of the translocation application and considered by the decision maker.

### Role of the Kiwi Recovery Group

The Kiwi Recovery Group is an advisory group that supports the role of the decision-maker by providing advice regarding the conservation requirements for kiwi. We hope that this information is of use to help inform their decision and help inform the stage 2 translocation proposal.

### Previous advice

Recommendations outlined in the previous advice paper, dated 4 August 2021 ([DOC-6737709](#)) remain the same, with the exception of the source location.

It was noted that kiwi will begin to disperse quickly, and that dogs will be the greatest risk to kiwi establishing. The following was recommended:

- Coromandel brown kiwi to be considered as a source site, rather than Ponui to allow for future opportunities for birds to be able to go the mainland, should they reach carrying capacity
- A DOC Threats Advisor be included as a team member to review the stoat control being undertaken and provide recommendations once an application is received
- A dog management plan for the release site and neighbouring properties, including a response plan should a dog kill a kiwi
- A robust consultation process with the broader Waiheke community to ensure they are supportive of kiwi coming to the island, and measures that would be needed to protect them from resident dogs
- An assessment of other potential risks e.g., cars, cattle stops/troughs and any areas of concerns that could be modified to reduce risk.

### Ponui as an alternative source site

The Ponui population of brown kiwi was founded in 1964 with six birds from Hauturu/Little Barrier Island and eight birds from Northland, well before anyone realised the level of differentiation between the four regional populations of brown kiwi (Northland, Coromandel, Western and Eastern). The Hauturu/Little Barrier population is also of mixed-provenance; primarily built up from a few Western birds introduced from Taranaki and Taupo, some Northland birds, and probably some original Northland-like kiwi surviving on the island since it was isolated from the mainland thousands of years ago.

The four “regional” populations are likely to have diverged from one another 50-200,000 years ago. In many species, isolation of this length of time leads to recognition of distinct sub-species. To preserve the genetic distinctiveness that has naturally developed in response to natural selection from local pressures, and random genetic drift, DOC’s position is not to mix individuals from different regions unless absolutely necessary. Once populations or species are genetically mixed it is impossible to separate the different regional forms. This position is supported by geneticists within and external to DOC.

Therefore if Ponui is used to establish kiwi on Waiheke, these birds would not be able to contribute to recovery programmes on the mainland. The rationale for sourcing birds from Ponui is acknowledged as this population has been impacted by droughts, with several deaths observed, and it would relieve some carrying capacity issues. However, if successful on Waiheke, this approach may be recreating a similar situation with no recourse to move the birds. We recommend this is socialised early with the Waiheke community, so expectations are able to be managed. We are appreciative of Save the Kiwi already raising this outcome **s9(2)(a)** and other interested parties.

We encourage selecting individuals from the Ponui population which are of the lowest relatedness, this could be obtained from the close order information currently available. This approach will help ensure founders are as genetically diverse as possible.

As the Coromandel community are not supportive of Coromandel brown kiwi being translocated to Waiheke, we are comfortable for Ponui to be used a source population.

I hope the information provided above is of value, please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Ngā mihi nui,

Emily King  
Kiwi Recovery Group Leader

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