[redacted]

10 November 2025

Whare Kaupapa Atawhai/
Conservation House 18
Manners Street Te Aro,
Wellington

6011
doc.govt.nz

Ref: OIAD-5755

Tēnā koe[redacted]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 15 October 2025, in which you asked questions related to Predator Free Rakiura and Pukunui/Southern Dotterel.

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

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *Pest prevention strategies (how will pests be kept off being transported to the island via vessels)?*

Because Rakiura is not yet predator free, biosecurity planning is under development.

To help prevent pests from being transported to Rakiura via vessels, Predator Free Rakiura has been working with the University of Melbourne's Centre of Excellence for Biosecurity Risk Analysis (CEBRA) to identify and understand the ways pests might reach the island. This includes developing a "risk pathway" model that maps out potential incursion routes.

As part of this work, rodent detector dogs were trialled at the Bluff ferry terminal in October. With passengers' consent, the dogs inspected luggage and freight. Early results show that passenger bags pose a low risk, while larger freight items like firewood and vehicles may carry a slightly higher risk.

These trials are helping to test and improve the risk model, to shape future pest prevention systems and to design of an effective system to keep a predator-free Rakiura that way.

2. *Projected/modelled southern dotterel recovery rates?*

In the last four years the population has been in steep decline, losing 40-50 adults each breeding season. The predicted rate of decline, without undertaking the predator control operation, was that we could lose pukunui altogether in the next three to five years.

The Pukunui Recovery Project aims to increase the pukunui population from 105 to at least 300 by 2035. The next flock count is in April 2026.

3. *Projected/modelled pest breeding rates based on the results of this operation?*

Pest recovery and breeding rates vary based on several factors. This will be distinct for different locations, depend on seasonality, weather, food availability and breeding dispersal. For Rakiura, projected pest breeding rates are not yet known. Early stages of the Predator Free Rakiura project involve undertaking monitoring to develop a model to better understand pest recovery and reinvasion.

In general, decades of monitoring and research have shown that conducting one aerial 1080 operation every 2–3 years, on average, can maintain predator numbers at a low level. This allows native species to survive, breed, and increase their populations. In some cases, more operations are necessary to protect highly endangered species or during periods of more frequent forest masts.

The approach will vary if the goal is eradication.

4. *Ongoing monitoring of chick viability over the next 5 years?*

The annual pukunui flock count occurs in April each year. This simultaneous count across flocking sites provides an indication of any changes in population size since the previous flock count.

Each season DOC aims to capture and band any unbanded birds in February and March, when the birds have left their breeding grounds and returned to their flocking grounds at Mason Bay, Awarua Bay, and Cook Arm at Port Pegasus. Genetic analysis of any juvenile birds caught at the flocking sites enable us to determine their parentage and thus determine where on the island they fledged from.

Additionally, this season DOC are conducting dedicated nest searching work across the entirety of known pukunui breeding habitat. Learnings from this work will inform where and how we conduct predator control in future seasons.

5. *Please provide a total amount of toxicants used on Rakiura island with dates of applications and all related costs involved with a breakdown of figures?*

DOC holds information on the total costs of the Pukunui Operation to date. The total spend on the Pukunui operation to date is $2,482,195. This figure includes both the ZIP-led operational activities and DOC-led monitoring efforts. Please note that additional costs are anticipated.

With regard to the breakdown of costs related to the Pukunui Operation – DOC does not hold this information. Therefore, this question is refused under section 18 (e) of the OIA. This is on the basis that no related information is held.

DOC contracted Zero Invasive Predators limited to undertake the operational delivery of the Pukunui Operation. They will hold details of the cost breakdown. If you wish to contact ZIP – their contact information is as follows: info@zip.org.nz

With regard to a breakdown of all 1080 used on Rakiura, with dates of application – please see the below table.

Table 1: Bait applied per day.

Phase One

Date	**Bait applied per day (kg)**
Day 1: 6/7/25	4,500
Day 2: 7/7/25	19,500
Day 3: 8/7/25	1,200
Total	**25,200**

Phase Two

Date	**Bait applied per day (kg)**
Day 1: 21/8/25	62,100
Day 2: 22/8/25	20,100
Total	**82,200**

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 OIA.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on DOC's website.

Nāku noa, nā

Ben Reddiex
Director National Programmes
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai