[redacted]

[redacted]

Whare Kaupapa Atawhai | Conservation House

18 Manners Street, Wellington 6011
PO Box 10420, Wellington 6140

info@doc.govt.nz

19 August 2026

Ref: OIAD-9478

Tēnā koe [redacted]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), and received on 22 July 2026, in which you asked for:

" We require urgent response from DOC please. I have also contacted MPI twice on the suspected wildlife (oystercatcher) 1080 poisoning in Motueka Sandspit near the mouth of the Motueka river.

At this stage birdflu has been excluded as a cause by MPI. The most likely cause is 1080 poisoning taking into account that much of the Mouteka Rover catchment - the Mt Arthur area of Kahurangi National Park - was aerially poisoned with 1080 less than 3 weeks ago.

The numerous dying and dead birds found on Motueka Sandspit are very similar to the Westport 2019 event where the Maruia 1080 drop saw rodents, birds and fish being washed the 50 kilometre's or more from the 1080 poison zone to the beach at Westport. Whether fish, birds and other wildlife were poisoned directly or in directly through secondary poisoning is not important. The health and safety and environment concern is that the community, kids, dogs etc are walking on the beach where this suspected poisoned wildlife is decomposing. There have been numerous local fb posts regarding these Birds dead and dying all over the place - with descriptions that they appeared to have broken backs before they died, also being consistent with 1080 poisoning.

Until and unless it can be excluded, it must be treated as probable 1080 poisoning – caused by the recent 1080 poison drop in these catchments.

We have been told by MPI it is not bird flu. That's great. However, to many, especially dog owners, it is even more concerning if its 1080. The community expects full testing of all dead birds and wildlife in Motueka and Golden Bay.

Can you please tell me what action is being undertaken.

If it is not bird flu, what does DOC say is causing the mass deaths of oystercatchers?

What control measures are being or have been implemented to protect the local community.

It is highly unlikely that there as been an algae bloom in winter, and there is certainly no evidence of this.

Please advise:

1 What testing has been done.

2) The full test procedures for each species.

3) What steps have been taken to ensure testing is independent and to a standard that would withstand any National or international scrutiny please.

4) Where can independent testing be done that us not government funded, so there can be no claim of a conflict of interest or inside cover up.

5) What birds or different species have been collected.
6) How many of each have been tested compared to what have been collected.
Mike. I expect that if I have missed something that a lawyer or a scientist would say we would require that you please be forthcoming and add that to the list without having myself or others get petty with the literature to get basic information required to obtain relevant information needed. Please confirm in the next 24 hours to a) what testing has been done, b) what steps gave been taken to inform and protect the public and their pets about the suspected poisoning and resulting risks
c) any other relative safety information.
d) Please also advise your local contact person who understands issues and has a clear direction and directive to get to the sharp end of this. And get them to contact us. Also, other contacts to get us to the answer as quickly as possible to clear up this regional issue. If this is a repeat of other events regarding 1080 downstream, then this is of National concern.
It needs to be mainstream news that it is not bird flu as MPI has said so. AND that the most likely cause is 1080 poisoning. More focus has to be put on preventing dogs and people being harmed from fish and fishing and secondary poisoning. As stated by DOC. A stand down period is required by your own safety data
Also, it has been brought to my attention that any bees or behives within many kilometres of a 1080 drop can collect 1080 and take back to the hive.
There are numerous private hives in and around the Kahurangi park and drop site that i suspect have not been informed of
These hives and people could be distributing poison honey to members of the community. This warrants immediate mainstream media response warning of the danger. ”

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA). (This includes the parts of this same request that the Tasman District Council formally transferred to DOC for response on 7 August 2026. Your request was addressed to a number of parties.)

Cause of death and actions being undertaken
The cause of death of the birds has not been determined at this time. DOC is working with other agencies to assess the available evidence and investigate possible causes.

Testing has been undertaken to determine whether 1080 poisoning was involved. Based on the testing results and the evidence available to date, DOC has ruled out 1080 poisoning as the cause of death. No 1080 was detected in the tissue samples collected from affected birds and tested. Further, DOC has identified no viable exposure pathway linking the deaths of the birds to the aerial 1080 predator control operation.

The aerial 1080 predator control operation was undertaken in an inland forest environment within the Mt Arthur area, while the bird mortalities occurred in a coastal estuarine environment at Motueka Sandspit. South Island pied oystercatchers primarily feed on estuarine and coastal invertebrates and do not typically forage within the treatment area. DOC's assessment did not identify a mechanism by which sufficient quantities of 1080 could have been transported from the treatment area to the noted sandspit and subsequently ingested by the affected birds.

Taken together, these factors do not support a causal link between the aerial 1080 operation and the observed mortality event. Accordingly, the deaths are not being treated as a 1080 poisoning event.

Public health and safety measures
Testing undertaken to date has not identified any risk to public health from the bird carcasses. As a result, efforts have been focused on investigating the cause of the deaths rather than implementing additional control measures.

Members of the public should continue to exercise standard precautions when encountering dead wildlife regardless of the cause of death, including avoiding direct contact and keeping dogs away from carcasses.

DOC has not received any advice indicating that additional public safety measures are required in the areas where the birds have been found.

Specific questions
Using your questions and numbering/lettering, our responses are listed below:

1 What testing has been done.

DOC collected tissue samples from two South Island pied oystercatchers found at the Motueka Sandspit on 23 July 2026.

The samples were sent to the Bioeconomy Science Institute (BSI) Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research Toxicology Laboratory (BSI Toxicology Laboratory) for testing for sodium fluoroacetate (1080). Testing was undertaken between 24 and 28 July 2026.

No 1080 was detected in either sample. Please see attached Item 1, listed in the table below.

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	28 July 2026	BSI Toxicology Laboratory Analysis Report	Released in part

In addition to this testing:

- The Nelson branch of Birds New Zealand commissioned further stomach content testing through the Cawthron Institute.
- The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) commissioned necropsy and pathology testing of birds collected during the initial response.

2) The full test procedures for each species.

Information regarding sampling protocols, testing methods, and laboratory procedures is publicly available from Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research at the following links:

Toxicology laboratory » Manaaki Whenua

Sampling protocols » Manaaki Whenua

Tests & methods » Manaaki Whenua

3) What steps have been taken to ensure testing is independent and to a standard that would withstand any National or international scrutiny please.

The testing was undertaken by the BSI Toxicology Laboratory. It holds accreditation from International Accreditation New Zealand (IANZ) and is also recognised under the Ministry for Primary Industries' Recognised Laboratory Programme.

Information about the BSI Toxicology Laboratory's accreditation and quality assurance systems is available on the Manaaki Whenua website: Accreditation » Manaaki Whenua

4) Where can independent testing be done that us not government funded, so there can be no claim of a conflict of interest or inside cover up.

DOC holds a contract with the BSI Toxicology Laboratory to undertake toxicology testing, including testing for 1080. The laboratory operates under internationally recognised accreditation standards.

Please note that an authorisation under the Wildlife Act 1953 is required to possess, collect, or transport protected wildlife specimens, whether whole or in part.

5) What birds or different species have been collected.

6) How many of each have been tested compared to what have been collected.

DOC collected two deceased South Island pied oystercatchers. Both birds were tested for 1080.

a) what testing has been done

Please refer to the response provided for *Question 1* above.

b) what steps gave been taken to inform and protect the public and their pets about the suspected poisoning and resulting risks

If the reference to "*suspected poisoning*" in the above question relates to 1080, DOC has not implemented any additional public safety measures specific to 1080 poisoning at Motueka Sandspit.

This is because testing results and the evidence available to date have ruled out 1080 as the cause of death.

c) any other relative safety information.

Testing undertaken to date has not identified a public health risk associated with the bird deaths.

Members of the public should continue to both follow normal precautions when encountering deceased wildlife and report unusual wildlife mortality events through the appropriate agency channels.

d) Please also advise your local contact person who understands issues and has a clear direction and directive to get to the sharp end of this. And get them to contact us. Also, other contacts to get us to the answer as quickly as possible to clear up this regional issue.

DOC continues to work with relevant agencies to investigate the matter and assess any new information that becomes available.

If it becomes necessary, updates based on scientific evidence would be prepared and released. No details for a local DOC staff member will be supplied at this time, as existing avenues for contacting DOC remain appropriate and sufficient in the circumstances.

Enquiries regarding animal health investigations undertaken by MPI should be directed to MPI.

Official information within the scope of your request

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the document listed as Item 1 in the table above, subject to information being withheld under one or more of the following sections of the OIA, as applicable:

- section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people, and
- section 9(2)(g)(ii) – to protect Ministers, officials, or employees from improper pressure or harassment.

In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the OIA and determined there are no public interests that outweigh the grounds for withholding.

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) and attached documents may be published on DOC's website.

Nāku noa, nā

Ben Reddiex
Director, Biodiversity National Programmes
Department of Conservation | *Te Papa Atawhai*