[redacted]

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Ref: OIAD-9495

20 August 2026

Tēnā koe [redacted]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 25 July 2026, in which you asked for:

> *"1) a breakdown of the sex and age for each poisoned kea listed in this table (with a reference to which operation they were poisoned in)*
>
> *2) The same information about each kea poisoned or suspected to be poisoned by 1080 in any other aerial 1080 poisoning operations which are not included in this table including any monitoring outcomes for kea of any 1080 operations since then*
>
> *3) The name and any available photos of each kea that was poisoned with 1080 or suspected to be poisoned or otherwise went missing and any 1080 analysis or other autopsy results for each kea when these are available*
>
> *4) information to show the timing of the operation compared to the most recent suspected or confirmed beech mast year, and how the timing for 1080 operations relative to beech mast years in the Aerial 1080 in kea habitat SOP DOC 2612859 was worked out.*
>
> *5) information on current kea numbers including any estimates kf this, where possible broken down by valley or region, and tge basis of this estimate..*
>
> *6) how many kea are currently monitored - and what % of the total estimated population is monitored in each region?*
>
> *What are the ages and sex of each have monitored birds inrach region?*
>
> *7) any analysis of the local or population wide effects of poisoning kea wirh 1080 .*
>
> *Eg Kea death rate per 1080 poison operation x frequency of 1080 operation and usual lifespan of kea, and any other factors and assumptions.*
>
> *Please include any monitoring using an average 17% poison rate of kea if 1080 operations are undertaken say 3 yearly and based on typical kea lifespan of 60 to 80 or more years, including any analysis of how many 1080 operations it will take to desecrate kea numbers locally ir nationally, to change kea from thriving (and even being considered a nuisance) to being at risk?*
>
> *Please also include information about any kea egg, or bird relocations including which ages and sexes were relocated from where to where, when, and why."*

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

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1) *a breakdown of the sex and age for each poisoned kea listed in this table (with a reference to which operation they were poisoned in)*

DOC has decided to refuse this part of your request under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act 1982, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

Information relating to individual kea mortality events is not held in a single dataset that records all of the attributes requested (sex, age, and associated operation). To compile this information, DOC staff would need to manually identify each bird referred to in the table and review a large number of historical monitoring records, field reports, necropsy results, and operation-specific files held across multiple locations and systems. This would require significant staff time and resources.

DOC has considered whether fixing a charge or extending the time limit under section 17A of the Act would enable the request to be met. However, given the scale of the work required to locate, review, and verify the information across numerous records, these options were not considered reasonable in the circumstances.

2) *The same information about each kea poisoned or suspected to be poisoned by 1080 in any other aerial 1080 poisoning operations which are not included in this table including any monitoring outcomes for kea of any 1080 operations since then*

Information within scope of this part of your request is contained in the attached documents:

- Item 1 Unpublished Report -2024 -Risk factors for kea mortality during 1080 aerial operations
- Item 2 - Huia Data base

The Huia Data base document contains information on recorded kea deaths and suspected poisoning events, including post-mortem findings, toxicology results, operation information, and conclusions regarding cause of death where available.

The Risk factors for kea mortality during aerial 1080 aerial operations report provides monitoring information from 29 aerial 1080 predator control operations across 17 locations between 2008 and 2022. The report assesses the survival of monitored kea through aerial 1080 predator operations and summarises monitoring outcomes, mortality rates, and factors associated with mortality risk. The report records that 271 unique kea were monitored through 29 aerial 1080 operations, with 49 deaths recorded across 13 operations and all monitored kea surviving in the remaining 16 operations.

These documents provide the information held by DOC that falls within the scope of this part of your request.

3) *The name and any available photos of each kea that was poisoned with 1080 or suspected to be poisoned or otherwise went missing and any 1080 analysis or other autopsy results for each kea when these are available*

DOC does not record kea mortality information in a manner that would enable us to identify and retrieve records based on bird names or photographs. While some individual kea may be assigned informal names by researchers or monitoring teams, these names are not consistently recorded across operational, monitoring, post-mortem, and database records and are not used as a searchable identifier.

Accordingly, to the extent that your request seeks information about kea identified by name and any associated photographs, this part of your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act 1982, as the information requested is not held by the Department in the form requested.

Information relating to post-mortem findings, toxicology results, and investigations into kea deaths that has been identified within scope of your request is provided in the attached documents with this response. These records contain available information regarding the cause of death, including 1080 analysis and autopsy findings where such information exists.

To the extent that your request seeks all photographs of kea that were poisoned, suspected to be poisoned, or otherwise went missing, DOC would need to undertake extensive searches across multiple operational files, research records, shared drives, and databases to determine whether such photographs exist and whether they relate to birds within scope of your request. This part of the request is therefore refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act 1982, as the information cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

4) *information to show the timing of the operation compared to the most recent suspected or confirmed beech mast year, and how the timing for 1080 operations relative to beech mast years in the Aerial 1080 in kea habitat SOP DOC 2612859 was worked out.*

On 6 August 2026 DOC contacted you to seek clarification of this part of your request, including which aerial 1080 operation or operations you were seeking information about. This was necessary because your request could apply to numerous operations undertaken over many years in different locations, and the information required to respond would vary depending on the operation concerned. We did not receive a response to our request for clarification.

Without clarification, the scope of the request remains unclear and would require DOC to identify and assess information across a large number of aerial 1080 operations and associated planning, monitoring, technical, and operational records in order to determine which information may be relevant to your request.

Accordingly, this part of your request is refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act 1982, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

5) information on current kea numbers including any estimates kf this, where possible broken down by valley or region, and tge basis of this estimate.

DOC does not hold an official estimate of the current kea population by valley or region. Due to the species' high mobility and the variable range of individual kea across large areas of the South Island, it is not possible to accurately estimate or attribute kea numbers to specific valleys or regions.

As outlined in "Kea (Nestor notabilis): a review of ecology, threats, and research gaps for conservation" (Kea Knowledge Review, section 2.1.4), estimating kea population size and trends is inherently difficult. The review notes that a sparse distribution across a range of habitats, high mobility, complex social structure, and variable conspicuousness make kea very difficult to count and monitor. Population estimates published in the scientific literature vary widely, ranging from approximately 1,000-5,000 individuals to as many as 15,000 individuals, reflecting the uncertainty associated with estimating abundance for this species.

The review further explains that existing estimates are generally derived by extrapolating results from localised studies across the species' wider range, and that robust methods for measuring population size and trends remain poorly developed.

Accordingly, DOC is unable to provide a reliable breakdown of kea numbers by valley or region, as such information is not held. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act 1982, as the information requested is not held by DOC.

6) how many kea are currently monitored - and what % of the total estimated population is monitored in each region?

What are the ages and sex of each have monitored birds inrach region?

DOC monitors kea populations using a range of techniques, including radio transmitters and RFID microchip technology. The number of monitored birds varies over time as transmitters are removed, fail, or are shed by birds, and new birds are tagged as part of ongoing research and monitoring programmes.

As at 30 June 2026, DOC held the following information on kea fitted with active radio-tracking harnesses:

- Arthur's Pass: 13 kea, comprising 7 adult males and 6 adult females.
- Nelson Lakes: 2 kea, comprising 1 adult male and 1 subadult male.
- Lewis Pass: 28 kea, comprising:
    - 15 adult males
    - 3 adult females
    - 4 subadult males

- 1 subadult female
- 2 juvenile males
- 3 juvenile females

This represents a total of 43 radio-tracked kea across these monitoring areas as at 30 June 2026.

DOC does not hold information on the percentage of the total estimated kea population currently monitored in each region. Population estimates are typically generated at national scales using a variety of survey and modelling techniques, while radio-tracking programmes are established for specific research or management purposes. As a result, monitored birds are not necessarily representative of the wider regional population, and DOC is unable to provide a reliable percentage of monitored birds for each region.

There have been no radio-tracked kea found within 1080 operations during 2026, and no 1080-related kea mortality has been detected in the surrounding areas during that period.

Information on kea mortalities recorded during the Arthur's Pass aversion-training trials is publicly available in Table 2 (page 8) of the report Aversion training wild kea with anthraquinone-treated repellent in non-toxic baits prior to 1080 operations does not improve survival outcomes | NZES which has previously been provided to you.

In addition, DOC holds the following information on four radio-tracked kea that died following the Arthur's Pass East 2022 operation:

Date	Operation	Cause of death	Band number	Colour Bands	Sex	Age Class
17/02/2022	AP East 2022	1080	V-3790	White BO on Green	Male	Juvenile
17/02/2022	AP East 2022	1080	V-1386	White BL on Black	Male	Adult
17/02/2022	AP East 2022	1080	V-3284	Yellow CP on Blue	Male	Juvenile
18/02/2022	AP East 2022	1080	V-3244	Black AQ on Grey	Male	Subadult

DOC's data systems use the unique band number as the primary identifier for individual birds. While some birds may have commonly used names recorded elsewhere, DOC does not routinely record or manage kea monitoring data by bird name.

RFID Monitoring

DOC also uses RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology to monitor kea. Several hundred birds have been fitted with a leg band containing a microchip that can be detected when they pass near a fixed RFID reader. These tags are less expensive than radio harnesses, have a longer operational life, and are more difficult for kea to remove.

Over the past five years, RFID tags have been deployed on 581 kea in parts of South Westland and the Aoraki/Mount Cook area, with up to 12 RFID reader stations established at sites of interest. This technology has been useful for improving understanding of kea movements between South Westland and Aoraki/Mount Cook and how those movements change seasonally. However, because RFID detections only occur when tagged birds pass close to fixed readers, this monitoring method cannot be used to reliably assess the impacts of individual 1080 operations on kea populations.

> *7) any analysis of the local or population wide effects of poisoning kea wirh 1080 .*
>
> *Eg Kea death rate per 1080 poison operation x frequency of 1080 operation and usual lifespan of kea, and any other factors and assumptions.*
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> *Please include any monitoring using an average 17% poison rate of kea if 1080 operations are undertaken say 3 yearly and based on typical kea lifespan of 60 to 80 or more years, including any analysis of how many 1080 operations it will take to desecrate kea numbers locally ir nationally, to change kea from thriving (and even being considered a nuisance) to being at risk?*

DOC does not hold any analysis that models kea population outcomes using the assumptions set out in your request.

DOC's research indicates that ecological outcomes cannot be reliably predicted using simple assumptions or fixed mortality rates alone. Available analyses recognise that outcomes are influenced by a range of factors including treatment history, environmental conditions, food availability, predator abundance, timing of operations, and site-specific ecological characteristics. The Department's research identifies that understanding long-term population effects requires consideration of multiple interacting factors rather than simple extrapolation from observed mortality rates.

Please refer to Item 2 "Risk Factors for Kea Mortality During Aerial 1080 Operations" which notes that any assessment of aerial 1080 impacts on kea populations must consider both the risks of non-target mortality and the benefits of predator control for kea survival and productivity. The report states that a full population-level cost-benefit analysis would require dedicated population modelling incorporating both positive and negative effects, and that such an analysis had not been undertaken as part of that work.

Accordingly, this part of your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Official Information Act 1982, as the Department does not hold the analysis requested.

Please also include information about any kea egg, or bird relocations including which ages and sexes were relocated from where to where, when, and why."

There have been no formal translocations of kea in recent times. In a few situations, individual birds that have been treated for lead poisoning have been released in a different place to where they were caught to reduce the risk of them becoming poisoned again.

Official information within the scope of your request

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents listed as Items 1 to 2 in the attached document schedule, subject to information being withheld under the following section of the OIA:

- 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 Official Information Act 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 Official Information Act.

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

Nāku noa, nā



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

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	March 2024	Unpublished Report -2024 -Risk factors for kea mortality during 1080 aerial operations	Released in part
2	2014-present	Huia Data base - Kea death Data	Released in full