



17th March 2025

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 19 January 2025, in which you asked for:

- “1. Please provide correspondence to or from DOC relating to the Kochumman family poisoning case and discussing the need to test for 1080 poison. Three Kochumman family members were admitted to hospital early in November 2017 (home address Putaruru). 1080 was listed as a possible cause of poisoning in the patients' working diagnosis at Waikato Hospital.*
- 2. Please provide correspondence between DOC and Pukaha Wildlife Sanctuary relating to kiwi deaths at Pukaha. Also provide any correspondence that exists about kiwi or other birds being poisoned or tested for toxins at Pukaha.*
- 3. What research has been done into the adverse effects of tagging, radio-tracking or handling wild birds? Is there evidence of tags hindering birds or causing infection? Is there evidence of predators being led to birds' nests or burrows through human scent? Has the Department considered the research from other countries around remote monitoring being less invasive? What is DOC policy around this?*
- 4. Please provide correspondence between DOC and Predator Free Rakiura relating to the content of the Predator Free Rakiura Update dated November 2024. This Update was emailed to people and subsequently recalled. What was the reason for the Update being recalled?”*

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982. On 14 February 2025 we extended the timeframe to respond to your request to 17 March 2025 as the request necessitates a search through a large quantity of information and meeting the original time limit would unreasonably interfere with the operations of the department. In addition, consultations necessary to make a decision on the request mean that a proper response cannot reasonably be made within the original time limit.

On the same day, you requested that we prioritise responding to your question 4, as you required the information urgently. A response letter was sent to you on 17 February 2025 with our response to your Question 4.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *Please provide correspondence to or from DOC relating to the Kochumman family poisoning case and discussing the need to test for 1080 poison. Three Kochumman family members were admitted to hospital early in November 2017 (home address Putaruru). 1080 was listed as a possible cause of poisoning in the patients' working diagnosis at Waikato Hospital.*

We have identified two email chains to and from DOC relating to the Kochumman family and testing for 1080. Please refer to documents one and two in the document schedule.

As you will note from the emails, 1080 had not been used in the area for many years, and was never considered a potential cause of the family's illness.

I have decided to release the relevant parts of these emails, subject to information being withheld under the following sections of the Official Information Act:

- Phone numbers under section 9(2)(a), to protect the privacy of natural persons, and
- Free and frank expression under section 9(2)(g)(i) – to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs,
- Information under section 9(2)(g)(ii), to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the protection of members of organisations, officers, and employees from improper pressure or harassment.

2. *Please provide correspondence between DOC and Pukaha Wildlife Sanctuary relating to kiwi deaths at Pukaha. Also provide any correspondence that exists about kiwi or other birds being poisoned or tested for toxins at Pukaha.*

We have identified 8 email chains along with relevant attachments between DOC and Pūkaha Wildlife Sanctuary relating to Kiwi deaths. Please refer to three to 11 in the document schedule. Please note that we have provided email chains that could be searched for, and identified, in our system. Since these conversations happened more than ten years ago it is possible that our system no longer holds some of the emails or they cannot be identified due to IT limitations. Further, one of the email attachments is a link that has been expired and hence I am unable to provide you the link.

I have decided to release the relevant parts of these emails, subject to information being withheld under the following sections of the Official Information Act:

- Information under section 9(2)(g)(ii), to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the protection of members of organisations, officers, and employees from improper pressure or harassment.

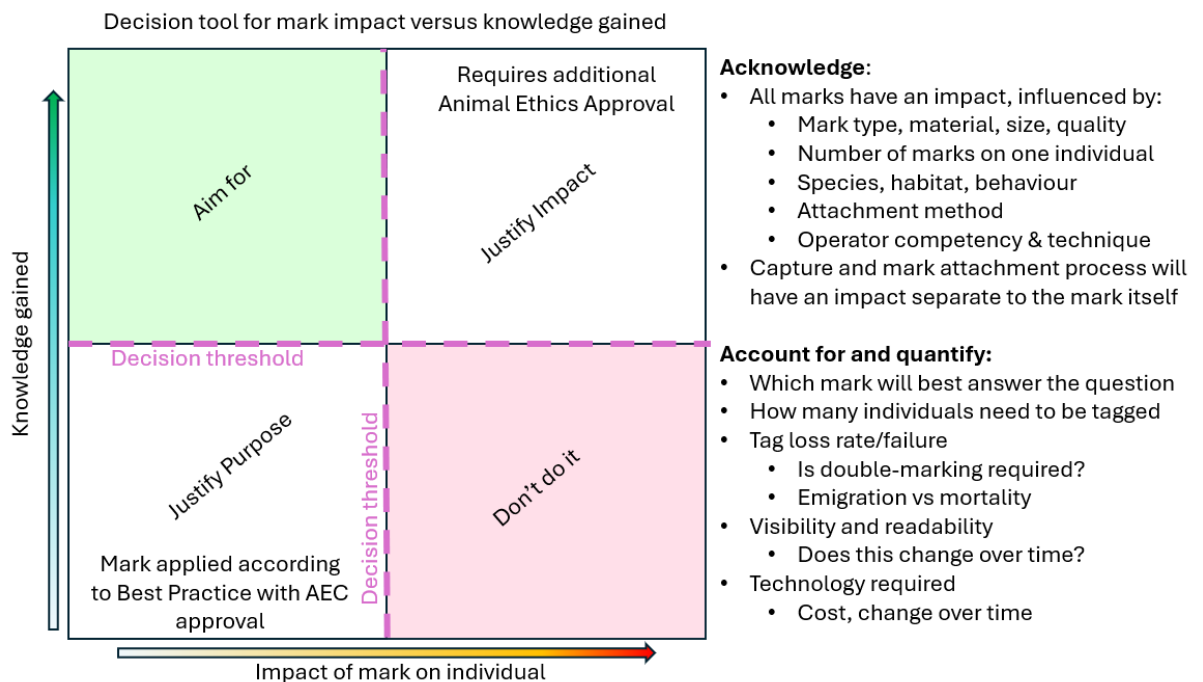
We could not find any information about kiwi or other birds being poisoned or tested for toxins at Pūkaha. This part of your request is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the Act – that the information does not exist or despite best efforts, cannot be identified.

3. *What research has been done into the adverse effects of tagging, radio-tracking or handling wild birds? Is there evidence of tags hindering birds or causing infection?*

Any capture, handling and marking of wildlife will inevitably have an impact. DOC has a statutory responsibility to manage marking of wildlife and as part of this, our Banding Office oversees the New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme.

We have stringent systems in place to ensure effects on animals are minimal, including:

- A strict [Certification System](#) to ensure that operators are assessed as competent
- All operators must work according to the [Bander's Code of Conduct](#)
- Marking of protected species requires a Wildlife Act Authority
- All projects that capture and mark (band, micro-chip, tag, radio-track) birds must report any adverse effects to DOC, and we continually improve Best Practice based on this information.
- Any study needs to be carefully planned to minimise not just the impact of the mark on the bird, its survival and breeding success, but also how tag loss is measured and accounted for and how many individuals need to be tagged to answer the research/monitoring question.
- If remote monitoring can answer the same question, then marking is not justified. Justification for proceeding with marking requires undertaking an evaluation of the potential options for marking, a clear purpose, competent people, adherence to the best practice of the activity proposed and the conditions included in a valid permit.
- The following Decision Tool is used to guide decision-making regarding marking by gauging the impact of a mark versus the knowledge gained.



You may be interested in the following paper that outlines the wide range of effects that marking techniques may have on birds:

B. Calvo & R.W. Furness (1992) A review of the use and the effects of marks and devices on birds, *Ringing & Migration*, 13:3, 129-151

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03078698.1992.9674036>

Is there evidence of predators being led to birds' nests or burrows through human scent?

We are aware of one research paper relevant to your request and are providing this to you, refer to document 12 'Paper on Nest Monitoring and Predator visitation of nests of banded dotterels' in the document schedule.

The study tested whether visiting dotterel nests for monitoring purposes increases the chances of those nests then being visited by predators. The study also examined whether there is any correlation between the direction of approach by the humans and the predators that visit the nests.

The study found that there was no significant correlation between the proportion of monitored nests that were visited by predators and the proportion of unmonitored nests that were also visited by predators. The study also found that there was no evidence to suggest that the directions of approach of the humans and predators that visited the nests were related, and predators approached nests from seemingly random directions that did not correlate with human scent trails to nests. The study concluded that "*approaching nests had little influence on how predators located [those] nests*".

Has the Department considered the research from other countries around remote monitoring being less invasive? What is DOC policy around this?

All research projects should consider international research as part of their literature review. Generally, remote monitoring is less invasive if it does not involve capture and marking, however not all monitoring or research can be effectively carried out without marking. As explained above, if remote monitoring can answer the same question, then marking is not justified. Justification for proceeding with marking requires undertaking an evaluation of the potential options for marking, a clear purpose, competent people, adherence to the best practice of the activity proposed and the conditions included in a valid permit.

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 National Programmes
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Table 1 - Schedule of documents

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	5-8 January 2018	Email chain: 1080 in the Greater Putaruru Area	<i>Released in part</i>
2	30-31 January 2018	Email chain: Curry in a hurry	<i>Released in part</i>
3	8-14 March 2008	Email chain: Ferret predation – Rangitane	<i>Released in part</i>
4	8-9 April 2008	Email chain: Kiwi death Pukaha	<i>Released in part</i>
5	8-9 April 2008	Email chain: Kiwi death Pukaha	<i>Released in part</i>
6	8-23 April 2008	Email chain: Kiwi death Pukaha	<i>Released in part</i>
7	29 July 2010	Email chain: Kiwi death articles	<i>Released in part</i>
8	17 August 2010	Email chain: Kiwi death comms plan	<i>Released in part</i>
9	23 May 2008	Email chain and attachment: Kiwi debrief	<i>Released in part</i>
10	8-23 April 2008	Email chain: Four kiwi predated	<i>Released in part</i>
11	16-19 May 2008	Email chain: kiwi death meeting	<i>Released in part</i>
12	2002	Paper on Nest Monitoring and Predator visitation of nests of banded dotterels	<i>Released in full</i>