

South Makara

Biodiversity Protection - Predator Control Programme 2023

Important information – possum control operation

We are undertaking possum control operation on Terawhiti Station, using the biodegradable pesticides, sodium fluoroacetate (1080) and cyanide.

Area

The operational area covers approximately 4,600 hectares and will be treated with two main methods.

- 2,800 hectares of regenerating forest, much of which is extremely difficult to access due to the nature of the terrain and density of habitat, will be treated with 1080 pellets aerially applied from a helicopter with an underslung bucket.
- A further 1,800 hectares will be treated by using hand laid feratox (cyanide) baits in bait stations.
- In addition, feratox will be laid within the aerial control treatment block where 1080 exclusion zones exist, predominantly on the perimeter of the aerial boundary.

There is no public land involved within this operational area.



Pre-feed pellets



Toxic 1080 pellets

Why are we doing it?

This work is being done as part of the Regional Predator Control Programme (RPCP), which is a Greater Wellington pest management initiative that aims to control possums and other predators, which are a serious threat to our native biodiversity and economy.

The RPCP preserves the work completed by OSPRI (TBfree), by maintaining low possum populations in areas declared 'Bovine TB free'. The RPCP continues to expand within the Wellington Region, as new areas gain this status and into high value biodiversity areas.

Possum control using 1080 has the additional benefit of controlling rats and stoats. Rats will die when they consume possum baits, while stoats will be killed when they consume the carcasses of poisoned rats and possums. A reduction in numbers of these introduced predators will further protect native plants and birds.

1080 timeline

12 April onwards: the application of non-toxic, tan coloured prefeed pellets will occur.

27 April onwards: the application of green coloured 1080 pellets will occur.

Both applications are subject to suitable weather conditions, minimal rainfall and low wind are required. If the prefeed application is delayed the 1080 application will also be delayed.

Cyanide timeline

Cyanide application using paste or pellets is expected to commence from 27 March onwards and will be ongoing during the next 12 months as possum control maintenance programmes continue.

Planning and permissions

The operation will be subject to strict safety, quality-assurance and monitoring requirements. Helicopters will be equipped with Global Positioning Systems (GPS) navigational technology to ensure the bait is accurately placed within agreed operational areas and identified 'exclusion zones' are avoided.

The use of 1080 and cyanide requires consent from the Medical Officer of Health. We must comply with both the Hazardous Substances & New Organisms Act, the Resource Management Act and the Health and Safety at Work Act.



South Makara Possum Control

Aerial 1080 control method

First, non-toxic tan-coloured “pre-feed” cereal pellets would be sown by helicopter within the control area. This will give possums a taste for cereal pellets encouraging them to consume the toxic pellets, making the operation more effective.

Seven to ten days after the non-toxic pellets are sown, helicopters will sow cereal pellets containing the 1080 baits. 1080 pellets are 20mm in diameter, coloured green and are cinnamon lured to make them unattractive to birds.

Each pellet contains 0.15% of 1080 and will be applied at a rate of 2kg per hectare. That’s less than one small box of laundry powder per rugby-field-sized area. Similar to laundry powder, 1080 breaks down when mixed with water into a harmless substance.

Why are we using Aerial baiting?

Aerial 1080 is particularly suited for parts of this operation given the size and nature of the habitat to be treated. It is a highly effective, cost-efficient and a safe method of controlling mammalian pests, particularly possums, rats and stoats.

In June 2011, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment strongly endorsed its continued use in New Zealand.

The use of Feratox (Cyanide)

Feratox is the commercial name of a pellet or paste containing cyanide to control possums.

Cyanide is an effective method to use for possum control in areas where the terrain is easier to access and the habitat is less restrictive.

- **Feratox Cyanide pellets:** These green pellets are a mix of a non-toxic bait to attract the possum and potassium cyanide (approximately 47.5%). They are placed inside bait stations or bait bags and attached to trees about 10 to 100 metres apart and can be just above ground level to head height.
- **Cyanara 50 paste:** This green jelly-like paste is approximately 50% potassium cyanide. It is placed in pea sized dots on sticks or stones on the ground, or at the base of trees, (10 to 100 metres apart). A non-toxic lure such as flour may be placed nearby to attract the pests.



Cyanara 50 Paste



Feratox

The baits are placed where there is evidence of possum sign, like fresh droppings, bark biting, scratch marks, or in suitable areas of habitat where possums are known to feed or nest.

The use of feratox will also extend into areas that are identified for aerial 1080 control, to treat areas where helicopter buffer zones may be applied. This will ensure a greater coverage of possum control ensuring a more effective reduction in possum numbers.

Who will be affected?

Unapproved public access is prohibited in the treatment area, which minimises the number of people affected by this operation. The main risk posed would be to the farm occupiers, managers and associated staff or contractors and their ability to carry out normal farming activities.

Other affected parties may include:

- **Staff employed by local energy companies** - staff require access to the property to service wind turbines etc.
- **Residents of coastal baches** – residents will be informed, and suitable exclusion zones will be placed around the baches and their water intake.
- **Adjoining landowners and graziers** – will be notified of the operation and all stock fences will need to be intact.
- **Hunters** – The NZ Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) recommends that the hunting for deer, goats or pigs for human consumption does not occur for four months, within two kilometres of an area that has been treated with 1080 baits. They have no hunting limits on areas where cyanide has been applied.

How do we notify the community?

We will notify all neighbours and other interested parties of the operation by letter and where requested this can be followed up with telephone calls. We also notify schools, Police, medical centres and veterinary clinics.

The operation will be advertised within local newspapers.

Warning signs and information boards will also be put up before the operation starts and will remain in position until poison residues are no longer present.

We also will provide detailed information on our website – gw.govt.nz/1080ops

DID YOU KNOW?

Safe drinking water

1080 is highly soluble and does not stay in water or soil, it breaks down into a harmless, biodegradable substance. Local health authorities apply strict conditions to aerial operations so that drinking water supplies are not contaminated. Safety has been confirmed by tests on several thousand water samples taken after aerial 1080 operations over many years.

KEY INFORMATION

The proposed operation presents no risk to human or pet health as long as these precautions are followed:

- If entering the operational area, follow the advice on warning signs at all main access points.
- Do not handle any bait or allow children to wander unsupervised in the area.
- Do not bring dogs into the operational area. Dogs are particularly susceptible to 1080. They must not be allowed access to bait or poisoned carcasses, which remain toxic to dogs until they have fully decomposed.
- Possums may consume 1080 baits and die outside of the operational boundary, treat the area outside the operation boundary with care as well.
- The NZFSA recommends avoid taking deer, goats and pigs for consumption within a two kilometre radius of the operational area. They also advise that hunting should cease in an area for four months following a 1080 drop.
- Greater Wellington will be monitoring the breakdown of toxic baits and possum carcasses. When these have decomposed, the poison warning signs will be officially removed.
- The public will be able to resume normal activities in the area once we have removed the poison signs. We'll also put a notice up on our website www.gw.govt.nz/1080ops when this occurs.

Looking for more information on 1080? Check out 1080: The Facts, facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/1080facts>

Check out our website, gw.govt.nz/1080ops for more information on

- Protecting your dog from 1080.
- Feratox (pellets and Cyanara 50 paste).

Wanting an operation update?

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