

Notification about predator control in Wilberforce and Mathias valleys

To protect native species, the Department of Conservation (DOC) is going to reduce possums in the area.

Why we are controlling introduced predators

The rare forests of kaikawaka/mountain cedar and Hall's totara in the upper tributaries of the Wilberforce and Mathias are a nationally significant ecosystem known as the beech gap where beech trees never colonised.

Wineberry, southern rata, fuchsia, lancewood and kamahi contribute to this forest's diversity. These forests are also home to a range of threatened native wildlife including kakariki, karearea/NZ falcon, piwauwau/rock wren, whio/blue duck, kea and koekoea/long-tailed cuckoo.

Possums are a serious threat to this type of forest ecosystem. Mature trees of cedar and totara are particularly vulnerable as they are highly palatable species preferred by possums.

Studies in New Zealand show severe dieback and collapse of forests from possum browse. Recent monitoring shows possum numbers are high in the Wilberforce and Mathias valleys.

How are we going to achieve this

The safest and most effective method to control introduced predators over large areas is to use biodegradable bait pellets containing 1080. This bait targets rodents and possums.

Stoats and feral cats are also controlled through secondary poisoning as they feed on the carcasses of the dead rodents and possums.

Helicopters will accurately distribute bait across the forest along pre-determined and monitored flight paths. This is the safest and most effective way to control predators in the area due to the vast and rugged terrain.

Trail camera possum monitoring will be undertaken before and after the post operation to measure its effectiveness. Possum monitoring will continue to be repeated every 2-3 years to observe population trends over time.

Consultation and consent outcome

DOC has consulted with hapū, iwi and key stakeholders including landowners adjacent to the treatment area.

This involved discussing the operational plan, listening to any concerns and considering ways to mitigate them.

DOC is delegated authority by the Environmental Protection Agency to decide applications for permission to use 1080 on land administered or managed by DOC.

Permission has been granted for this operation. DOC has also received the required permission from the Ministry of Health.

Deer repellent

Deer repellent will be used over the entire treatment area as done in previous operations here in 2012 and 2018.

Next steps

Adjoining landowners and other stakeholders are being notified and there will be a public notice in the local newspaper/s. There will also be warning signs placed at entrances to the treatment area immediately prior to the operation.

After the operation, DOC will contact iwi, hapū, and stakeholders about the results of the operation. We also aim to share insights about the outcomes for native species overtime.

Timeframe

The operation is planned for the first clear weather window between 14 September and 30 November 2026.

This operation begins with the distribution of non-toxic pre-feed bait pellets to prepare possums and rodents to eat the toxic bait (dyed green) that is applied afterwards. Both baits are about 16 mm in diameter and cylindrical shaped.

Map of predator control area

The map on the third page shows the confirmed area of 29,945 hectares for predator control.

Managing risk

1080 is poisonous to humans, domestic and game animals. In areas where the toxin has been applied, dogs are highly at risk until poisoned carcasses have disintegrated. This takes four-to-eight months or longer.

Risks can be eliminated by following these rules:

DO NOT touch bait

WATCH children at all times

DO NOT EAT animals from this area or within the buffer zone outside the treatment boundary.

The standard buffer zone is 2 km for deer and pigs, 200 m for rabbits, and 1 km for hares, tahr, wallabies and possums.

Poison baits or carcasses are DEADLY to DOGS

Observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about pesticides. These signs indicate pesticide residues may be still present in baits and poisoned carcasses. When signs are removed this means you can resume normal activities in the area. Always report suspected vandalism or unauthorised removal of signs.

If you suspect poisoning, please contact:

- Your local doctor or hospital
- The National Poisons Centre: 0800 764 766 (urgent calls) or 03 479 7248 or dial 111
- Seek veterinary advice for suspected poisoning of domestic animals

For more information

Please contact:

Vector Control Services

Ph: 0508 141 268

Email: info@vcs.net.nz

Visit the DOC website:

See more information about DOC's National Predator Control Programme

www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/national-predator-control-programme

See operational updates and detailed maps of predator control on public conservation land

www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/pesticide-summaries

See updates about track access and safety

www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/know-before-you-go/alerts

Learn more about why we use 1080 to control introduced predators

www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/methods-of-control/1080

Learn more about Predator Free 2050

www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/predator-free-2050



Taken at Moa Stream showing pronounced dieback of mountain cedar and totara from possum browse. The dead ones are grey/white. Photo: DOC

