

Notification about predator control in the Heaphy Lowland Area

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

Why we are controlling introduced predators

Native species are fighting for survival from predation by rats, stoats and possums. Without protection, we risk losing the unique natural heritage and biodiversity within the Heaphy Lowland. Due to consistently high seed production in the lowland forests of these areas, rodent numbers are constantly high, threatening native species.

The Heaphy Lowland operation is part of a wider effort to control predators in Kahurangi National Park in 2024/25.

How are we going to achieve this

The safest and most effective method we have to control introduced predators over large areas is to use biodegradable bait pellets containing 1080. This bait targets rodents and possums. Stoats are also controlled through secondary poisoning as they feed on the dead rodents.

Helicopters will accurately distribute bait across 27,809 hectares of the forest along pre-determined and monitored flight paths. This is the safest and most effective way to control predators in the Heaphy Lowland due to the vast and rugged terrain.

We will monitor the results of the operation by measuring rat numbers before and after the baits have been distributed.



Powelliphanta Snail. Photo: Anthony Behrens



The Heaphy River. Photo: Jane Williams

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.

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 1 November 2024 and 31 March 2025.

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.

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

Map of predator control area

The map on the next page shows the confirmed area of 27,809ha for predator control.

For more information

Please contact:

Operational planner, DOC Westport Office, 72 Russell St, Westport

0800 275 362

Westport@doc.govt.nz

OR

Vector Control Services

0508 141 268

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

