

Key facts about rat & possum control in the Whirinaki Core Area of the Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tane Conservation Park



The Department of Conservation plans to reduce rat and possum numbers over 1,913 ha in the Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tane Conservation Park (see map).

About this project

The Whirinaki Te Pua a Tane Conservation Park contains a large remnant of nationally rare lowland podocarp forest. The aim of this project is to create improved conditions and habitat for indigenous flora and fauna within the area and also provide a closer representation of a lowland podocarp forest before introduction of exotic predators and browsers.

The network of bait stations in the Core area has successfully been used to control rats and possums since 2003. The bait station grid system with 100m x 50m spacing makes for a comprehensive network to carry out safe and efficient pest control in accordance with best practice

How it is happening

Pindone cereal pellets placed in bait stations will be used to control rats in the Whirinaki Core Area. Feratox (potassium cyanide) pellets placed in bait stations will be used to control possums in the Whirinaki Core Area. Pindone pellets are approximately 10-12mm long, cylinder shaped and dyed green. Feratox (potassium cyanide) pellets are approx the size of a pea, dyed green.

Timeframe

Bait laying will begin in the first period of favourable weather after the 28th of August 2017

and continue to May 31st 2018. The Department of Conservation (DOC) will contact all adjacent landowners/ occupiers and place warning signs immediately prior to the operation starting.

Important information

The pesticides we use are poisonous to humans and domestic animals. Poisoning of domestic animals such as dogs can occur through eating baits or poisoned animals. The risk to dogs with pesticide in carcasses will remain until they have rotted, perhaps for more than six months.

These risks can be eliminated by following these simple rules:

- **DO NOT** touch bait
- **WATCH CHILDREN** at all times
- **DO NOT EAT** animals from this area or from within a 2km "buffer zone" outside the operational area boundary
- Remember, poison baits or carcasses are **DEADLY** to **DOGS**

Observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about pesticides. Warning signs indicate that pesticide residues may still be present in baits or animals. When signs are removed, this means that you can resume normal activities in the area. Please report suspected vandalism or unauthorised removal of signs. If in doubt, check with DOC.

Why we are controlling rats and possums

Rats and possums are introduced mammalian pests in the Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tane Conservation Park (Whirinaki). The consumption of vegetation, fungi, fruit, invertebrates, adult birds, chicks and eggs by these pests make them both predators and competitors for our native wildlife. They have a significantly detrimental effect on all ecosystems in the park.

In the Whirinaki Core area rats and possums will be intensively controlled for forest ecosystems recovery. Over time, as pest numbers are maintained at low levels the forest will recover to a closer representation of the unique original lowland podocarp/ hardwood/ beech forest ecosystems that existed within the Whirinaki prior to pest incursions. Rats and possums will also be controlled to protect breeding Kokako pairs. By intensively controlling rats and possums at key times in the year Kokako can produce chicks without the ongoing of pressure of predators. Other key species that benefit from pest control in the Whirinaki Core area include Kaka, Robin, Kereru, and invertebrates such as the Tree Weta.

Why we are using this method

Pindone and Feratox (potassium cyanide) have been selected for rat and possum control based on past success, safety, efficiency and price.

Operational planning

The use of Feratox (potassium cyanide) requires the consent of the Medical Officer of Health. The use of Pindone requires consultation on the effects and notification with the people most affected by the operation such as Iwi and adjacent landowners to the control sites.

DOC assesses and approves all vertebrate pesticide operations on public conservation land

on behalf of and following procedures approved by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA). DOC approving managers apply conditions to ensure that all legal and policy requirements are met and that any potential risks of the operation are managed.

To apply for these consents, a detailed assessment of the risks involved in the work was completed. This is called an Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE). A copy for this operation can be obtained from your local DOC office. Consent approvers usually impose conditions on the operation to further safeguard the public and the environment.

We consulted people most affected by this operation prior to finalising the operational detail, and notified other groups through this fact sheet.

If you suspect poisoning

Always contact:

- Your local doctor; or
- Local hospital; or
- National Poisons Centre: 0800 764 766 (urgent calls) or 03 479 7248 (non-urgent and general enquiries), or dial 111.

For more information

Hayden Spencer
Department of Conservation, Murupara Office
1188 Main Rd, RD1 Murupara 3079, Ph: 07 366 1062

Please get in touch with Hayden if you want to be notified again prior to the operation.

