

Notification about predator control in the Dart, Caples, and Routeburn valleys

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

Why we are controlling introduced predators

The Dart, Caples, and Routeburn Valleys have a diverse range of flora and fauna due to the diverse landscape in this area. Many unique and threatened native species live in these valleys including mohua, kākā, rock wren/pīwauwau, whio, kea, and long-tailed bats/pekapeka. These native species are fighting for survival due to the persistent threat of rats, possums, and stoats.

Next summer, we predict beech forests in the area will drop trillions of seeds during a mass seeding event known as a mast. This will fuel a surge in rat and stoat populations. If we did nothing during the mast, native birds, lizards, bats, and insects would be devastated by predators and could completely disappear from these valleys.

We need large-scale predator control to protect native species during the mast. If we do nothing, we risk losing the native species that make this place precious and unique.

How are we going to achieve this

To protect native species, the Department of Conservation is planning to reduce predator numbers across up to 53,633 hectares of forest.

The most effective tool to control predators over large areas is bait pellets containing sodium fluoroacetate (1080) distributed by helicopter. This is the only way to control possums, rats, and stoats across vast, remote and rugged landscapes. Ground-based trapping and bait stations are effective in smaller more accessible areas, and trapping and bait station networks will continue to be utilised to support the aerial operations.

This work is part of DOC's National Predator Control Programme. We are protecting the remaining populations of threatened native species while tools continue to be developed to eradicate possums, rats and stoats across New Zealand.



Rock wren. Photo by Wynston Cooper

Consultation and consent outcome

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

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 will be notified by email 24 hours before the prefeed and toxic operations. There will also be warning signs placed at entrances to the treatment area immediately prior to the toxic operation occurring.

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 first operation is planned for the first clear weather window between October 2025 and early 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.

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 54,991 hectares for predator control.

For more information

Please contact:

Operational Planner

Department of Conservation, National Predator Control Programme

Phone: 0800 275 362

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

