

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, stoats and possums in the area.

Why we are controlling introduced predators

Native species are fighting for survival due to predation from rats, stoats and possums. Without ongoing protection, we risk losing the unique natural heritage and biodiversity within Mt Aspiring National Park and the Caples Conservation Area.

In the summer of 2022/23, a beech tree mast is forecast in the Dart, Routeburn and Caples Valleys area. Mast events produce massive quantities of seeds which leads to a population explosion of rodents and stoats. Without control we expect predator populations will grow to such high numbers by spring 2023 that they would have devastating effects on nesting native birds, many of which are only just holding on including mohua.

Undertaking predator control in November this year will give us the best chance of preventing a predator explosion. It will benefit native species including rock wren/tuke, mohua, whio, kea, kākā, and pekapeka/long-tailed bats. They will be able to breed more safely and chicks will have a better chance of reaching adulthood.

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 cereal pellets containing 1080. This bait targets rodents and possums. Stoats are also controlled through secondary poisoning as they feed on the carcasses of the dead rodents.

Helicopters will safely and precisely distribute bait across approximately 46,000 ha along pre-determined and monitored flight paths. This is the only viable method to control introduced predators in these valleys due to the vast and rugged terrain. It will be the sixth time we have controlled predators in the area using this method since the first operation in 2006.

On-going ground operations including hand-laid baiting, bait stations, and trapping programmes support this work. We will monitor rats after the operation to quantify its success. We will continue to monitor mohua each summer to see the population trends over time.



The Routeburn Valley. Photo by Sarah Wilcox

Consultation and consent outcome

DOC has consulted with hapū, iwi and key stakeholders including landowners adjacent to the operational area. This involved discussing the operational plan, listening to any concerns and considering ways to mitigate them.

DOC staff in certain positions are delegated the power of the Environmental Protection Agency to decide applications for permission to use 1080 on land administered or managed by DOC. The operation will not commence before permission is received and all conditions will be followed. The operation will also comply with all conditions in the public health permission issued by the Ministry of Health.

Next steps

Adjoining landowners and other stakeholders will be notified and there will be a public notice in the local newspaper/s. There will also be warning signs placed at entrances to the operational 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 between November and December 2022. The timing is weather dependent.

This operation begins with the distribution of non-toxic pre-feed bait pellets. This prepares possums and rodents to eat the toxic bait (dyed green) that is applied 1-6 weeks 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 of 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



Rock wren/tuke. Photo by Kerry Weston

For more information

Please contact:

NPCPWhakatipu@doc.govt.nz

Or

Operations Manager
Department of Conservation
Whakatipu Office
1 Arthurs Point Road
Queenstown

03 442 7933

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

Map of predator control area covering 45,000 ha in the Dart, Routeburn and Caples valleys

