

Notice
11 May 2020



Impending commencement of Molesworth possum control operation

Vector Free Marlborough Limited (VFML) has been engaged by TBfree New Zealand to carry out an aerial possum control operation in the Molesworth (Bush Gully & Tarndale) project area.

The Game Animal Council and the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association were successful in negotiating the use of deer repellent on all prefeed and 1080 bait used in the operation. However, hunters need to be aware that game animals should not be sold or taken for eating from within or adjacent to the operational area until it is declared clear of pesticides.

Indicative commencement date

The 2021 Molesworth operation will be carried out in two stages.

Molesworth 'A' (Bush Gully - Tarndale)

Control in the 81,662-hectare Molesworth 'A' (Bush Gully - Tarndale) block is scheduled to commence from **15 May 2021**, with the aerial application of non-toxic cereal pre-feed pellets. This will be followed approximately 7-10 days later by the aerial application of bait containing biodegradable Sodium fluoroacetate (1080). In addition to aerial methods, supplemental ground control, using hand-laid 1080 pellets and/or Feratox encapsulated cyanide in bait stations may be undertaken around sensitive areas, and other places unsuitable for aerial methods.

All work is weather dependent, and commencement may be later than indicated. In the event of an extended delay, further notices will be placed to advise the public.

Molesworth 'B' (Yarra - Five Mile)

Control in the 8,187-hectare Molesworth 'B' (Yarra - Five Mile) block is scheduled to commence from **1 October 2021**. Public notices for this will be placed nearer the time. Control methods for this block will be the same as the Molesworth 'A' (Bush Gully - Tarndale) block.

Description of project area

The control area takes in a substantial tract of Molesworth Station and part of the adjacent Muller Station. The control area is more or less bounded by the Acheron Road in the east, Tophouse Road in the west, Clarence River in the south and the Raglan Range to the north. A number of waterways flow through

the project area, with the most notable of these being the Acheron, Clarence and Wairau rivers. Refer to map and factsheet included with this message.

The area takes in approximately 90,000 hectares of publicly owned land, administered by various agencies including the Department of Conservation (DOC), Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) and several local authorities.

Description of bait

Aerial and ground control using 1080:

- Pre-feed - Non-toxic cereal-based pellet, approximately 20mm long, cinnamon-lured and non-dyed (tan coloured).
- Toxic bait - Cereal-based pellet, approximately 20mm long, cinnamon-lured and dyed green with a toxic loading of 0.15% Sodium fluoroacetate (1080).

Note - all prefeed and 1080 bait for this operation will contain deer repellent.

Ground control using cyanide:

Feratox encapsulated cyanide in the form of a capsule, dyed green/blue, presented with feed-paste or similar attractant, contained inside reusable bait stations. Bait stations will be installed 130cm above the ground.

Recommended precautions

The public are reminded of the danger that toxic baits and possum carcasses pose, particularly to children and dogs.

- Do not touch or eat baits
- Children must be kept under strict supervision in the control area.
- Dogs must be kept under strict control at all times and not have access to, or be taken into, the control area, as they are particularly susceptible to harm from contact with toxic baits and poisoned carcasses. The risk that poisoned carcasses pose to dogs may extend downstream of the control area.
- Toxin warning signs will be installed at main public entry points and the public are reminded that it is an offence to remove this warning signage. Please follow the instructions on the signs.
- Game animals should not be sold or taken for eating from within or adjacent to this area until it is declared clear of pesticides.

If you suspect poisoning:

- Contact your local hospital, or dial 111
- National Poisons Centre 0800 POISON – 0800 764 766
- In the case of a domestic animal being poisoned, contact a local veterinarian.

Attached is a fact sheet providing further information about the operation, the methodology being used and precautions that should be taken.

For further information please contact:

Molesworth Operation Controller
Vector Free Marlborough Limited
PO Box 5171, Springlands, Blenheim 7241
Free Phone: 0508 548 008
Email: communications@vectorfree.co.nz
Website: www.vectorfree.co.nz

Important information

Warning signs will be placed at all main access points to the operational area and everyone must follow the cautions on the signs. There's no health risk when using this area as long as you follow these instructions:

Do not handle any bait or allow children to wander unsupervised. Cereal baits containing 1080 are dyed green.

Do not hunt or take game from within a two kilometre radius of the operational area for human or pet consumption. It's an offence to sell meat products that have been

exposed to 1080. Hunting can resume approximately four months following the control work.

Please observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about the pesticide. Warning signs indicate that pesticide residues may still be present in the baits or carcasses. When the signs are officially removed, you can resume normal activities in the area.



Please note that dogs are prohibited on Molesworth Station.

Dogs are particularly susceptible to 1080. They must not be allowed access to bait or poisoned carcasses which remain toxic to dogs until they have fully decomposed.

Dogs must not be brought into treatment areas until the warning signs have been officially removed.



What to do if you suspect poisoning

Contact your local hospital or doctor, or **dial 111**

National Poisons Centre
0800 POISON (764 766)

If a domestic animal is poisoned, contact a local veterinarian.



Further information

Because of public interest in this operation, there is a special interest page on the OSPRI website: ospri.co.nz/molesworth

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For more information on controlling bovine TB and how and why 1080 is used in New Zealand, visit 1080facts.co.nz

For guidance on recreational hunting see our factsheet 'TB Information for Hunters' at ospri.co.nz

For guidance on commercial hunting see the Ministry for Primary Industries and Department of Conservation websites.



Molesworth Bovine TB Control Operation



Removing TB from Molesworth's wildlife

What is planned

OSPRI is planning an aerial possum control operation on Molesworth Station during winter 2021 as part of a wider plan to eradicate TB from Molesworth cattle by 2026. This region has an extensive history of bovine-TB infection in both livestock and wildlife. In recent years control efforts have been delayed due to several factors including further research into control methodology, impact on recreational hunting, and COVID-19 restrictions. Aerial control over a large area and short timeframe is the key to effectively reducing possum numbers to a level where TB cannot be

sustained in the wildlife population. This approach also minimises the risk of re-invasion by infected possums.

Bush Gully, Tarndale, Saxton and Severn trial areas are to be aerially treated with biodegradable sodium fluoroacetate (1080) in May-June 2021. The combined operation covers a total area of approximately 81,400 ha and will begin with aerial application of tan coloured non-toxic pre-feed. One to two weeks later, toxic green cereal pellets will be applied by helicopter at a rate of two kilograms per hectare. Six gram pellets will be used rather than the standard 12g to facilitate more rapid breakdown of bait. Each pellet contains a small proportion (0.15 percent) of 1080. Deer repellent will be used in both the pre-feed and the toxic bait.

Reducing deer by-kill during Molesworth possum control

Deer on Molesworth

Deer are not the target of this operation, but deer deaths are anticipated even with the use of deer repellent on all bait.

The last Molesworth aerial operation, in Acheron East in 2017, resulted in up to 90% non-target deer by-kill. Several factors contributed to the high number of deaths including the long dry period post drop, operational timing, and the use of non-deer repellent bait.

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Drinking water recommendations

While toxin application takes place, and for 72 hours afterward, avoid taking water for drinking and cooking purposes from streams, lakes and tarns.

Where provided at huts and campsites, use alternative water supplies or bring in your own supply.

Local health authorities apply strict conditions to aerial operations so that public drinking water supplies are not contaminated, and testing of public supply is undertaken.



Mitigating impact on deer

Following Acheron East (2017), aerial possum control operations were put on hold until research could be undertaken on a new deer repellent better suited to the open nature of the dryland habitat found in this high-country region. Previous deer repellent formulations were surface coated, increasing the likelihood that the bait would lose their repellent effectiveness before there has been sufficient rainfall to initiate breakdown of the 1080 component.

New deer repellent baits are now available for this operation where the repellent is incorporated within the cereal pellet itself rather than surface coated. This will be used across the entire treatment area to support better deer population survival rates and reduce by-kill.

The 2021 operation will take place across May-June, coordinating with both the farming operations and favourable weather; rain and snowfall to facilitate rapid detoxification of baits.

Pre and post monitoring of the deer population will be undertaken as part of the wider research into population recovery on Molesworth.

What hunters can do

There are no restrictions on hunting before the operation; any access and hunting permits should be obtained via DOC and Molesworth Station.

Once the toxic bait has been applied, do not remove deer from the area (including the buffer zone) until the caution period has ended. This is determined by the speed of breakdown of the bait and possum carcasses.

Hunters will need to refer to the NZ Food Safety authority (NZFSA) requirements for hunting wild and game estate animals, and be aware of the pesticide status of the area they are hunting in.

Do not bring dogs into the treatment area until after the caution period has ended. Dogs are particularly susceptible to poisoning by 1080. When dogs come into contact with 1080 through ingesting baits or scavenging poisoned carcasses, the outcome is usually fatal. Most reported dog deaths occur after eating poisoned carcasses, not bait.

What to expect from the operation

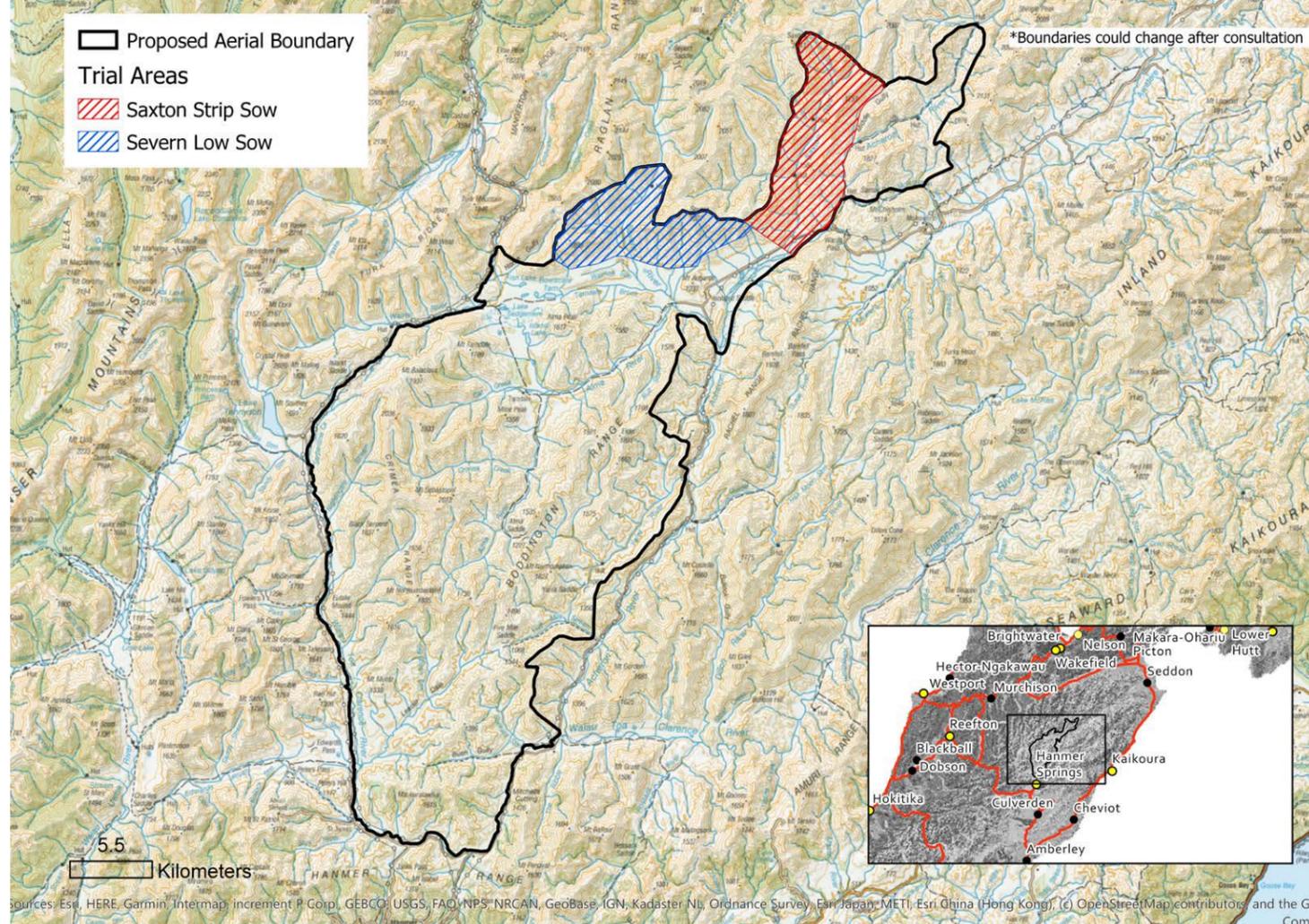
The operation will begin with the distribution of non-toxic, tan-coloured cereal pellets by helicopter. This “pre-feed” gives possums a taste for the pellets and overcomes bait shyness.

One to two weeks later (dependant on weather), toxic, green cereal pellets are applied by helicopter. Research has shown that the home ranges of possums in high country terrain are larger than the ranges of forest dwelling possums.

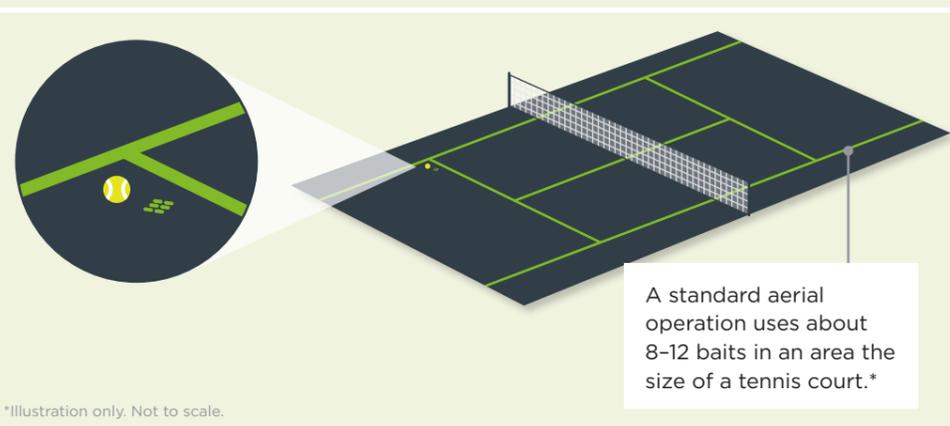
Possums that forage wider areas are more likely to encounter and consume a lethal dose of bait even with reduced application (lower density).

Based on this research, OSPRI will be trialing two alternative methods of toxic bait application across the Severn and Saxton blocks.

Bush Gully and Tardale – toxic bait will be applied by helicopter at a rate of two kilograms per hectare. That’s about six baits in an area the size of a tennis court.



Minimal amounts of 1080 in bait



*Illustration only. Not to scale.

Severn Trial Area – Will be treated with 50% less toxic bait (1kg per/ha). Standard broadcast methods will be used meaning complete coverage will be achieved.

Saxton Trial Area – Will be treated with 75% less toxic bait (0.5kg per/ha) and the application method will be different. Bait will be applied at 2kg/ha in strips of 30m width, with a non-treated gap of 100m between strips.



To monitor treatment efficacy, radio collaring of possums and deer is planned within the treatment areas. If you see an animal with a collar, please refrain from hunting, touching or moving the animal as this will distort data collection.

Sodium fluoroacetate bait pellets

Each pellet contains a small proportion (0.15 percent) of biodegradable sodium fluoroacetate (also known as 1080). Biodegradable 1080 means it is broken down by micro-organisms in water and soil into harmless elements. It does not leave permanent residues in water, soil, plants, or animals. The operation will be subject to strict safety, quality-assurance and monitoring requirements. Advanced GPS navigational equipment will be used to ensure the pellets are accurately placed and exclusion zones avoided.

What happens now

This operation is planned for May 2021. A contractor, Vector Free Marlborough Limited, will be delivering the operation on behalf of OSPRI's TBfree Programme. Before the operation, affected landowners and occupiers will be visited by the contractor. They will discuss boundary concerns, water supply safety and the management of any risks to dogs and livestock.

Statutory permissions from the Department of Conservation and the Nelson Marlborough Public Health are required for the operation. Affected landowners and occupiers as well as interested parties will be contacted again before the operation starts. Notices will be published in local newspapers and warning signs will be placed at all likely access points to the operational area.