OSPRI

Clarence Reserve North bovine TB control operation

OSPRI's TBfree programme

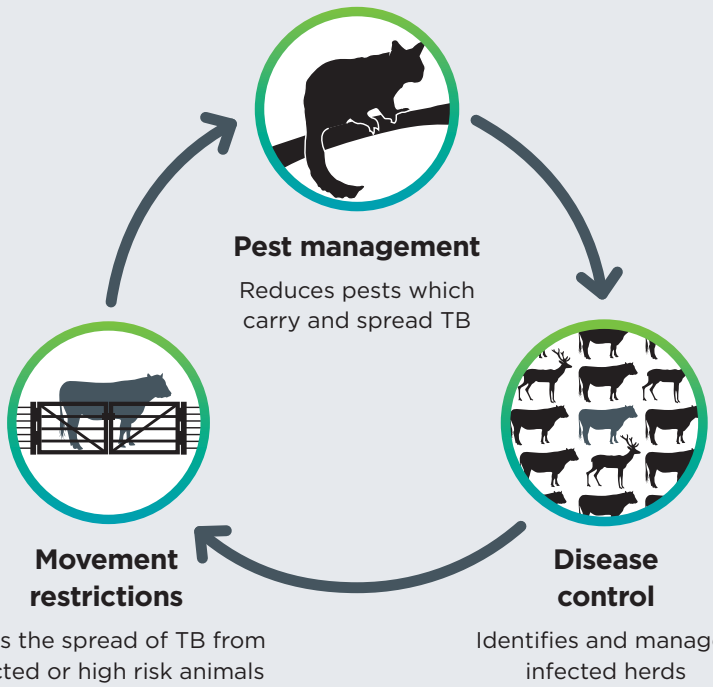
The TBfree programme aims to manage and eventually eradicate bovine tuberculosis (TB) from New Zealand's farmed cattle and deer and wild animal populations. Controlling disease prevents livestock production losses and protects the world leading reputation of New Zealand's dairy, beef and deer products. We use possum control, along with regular herd testing and movement restrictions, to achieve our eradication goals. Information gathered from wild animal surveys, recent and historic findings of TB in wild animals, herd testing results and the operational history of the region are used when planning operations.

Targeting possums

We're running a possum control operation in the Clarence Reserve North (please see the map provided for the operation area). It will cover up to 16,650 hectares.

To control the spread of bovine TB, possum numbers need to be kept extremely low (around one to two animals every 10 hectares) for at least five years. Further control work is needed in the Clarence Reserve North area to reduce the possum population and minimise the risk of the disease spreading through wild animal populations and onto farmed cattle and deer. Possum control has dramatically reduced the number of infected herds in the North Canterbury region. This area was last treated in 2019.

How we control TB



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, toxic, green cereal pellets – each containing 0.15 percent biodegradable sodium fluoroacetate (also known as 1080) – will be applied by helicopter at a rate of one kilogram per hectare. That's about one bait to every 60 square metres. The Clarence Reserve North 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.

Continued over page...

Mitigating impact on deer

We intend to use deer repellent on baits, where consent conditions allow, to reduce by-kill on deer populations.

What hunters can do

Once the toxic bait has been applied, do not take game animals 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.

The method

The vast majority of possum control in the region is done by local contractors using ground-based traps and hand-laid toxins. The remaining, far smaller area is controlled using aerially applied pellets containing biodegradable 1080. Aerial control is efficient, cost effective and has been extremely successful at knocking possum numbers down to very low levels in the past. It is preferred in areas like the Clarence Reserve due to the rugged nature of the terrain. The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment also supports aerial control. The commissioner completed an extensive review into the use of 1080, in which she strongly endorsed its continued use in New Zealand. Please visit pce.parliament.nz to read this report.

What happens now?

This operation will commence from May 2024, Vector Free Marlborough will be doing the work on behalf of OSPRI's TBfree programme. Before the operation, affected landowners and occupiers will be contacted and visited by this contractor. They will discuss boundary issues, water supply safety and the management of any risks to dogs and livestock. Consents from the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Health are required for this operation. Affected landowners and occupiers 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.

Biodiversity benefits

The operation will have additional conservation benefits for native birds and bush. Possums eat the forest canopy and prey on native birdlife, including eggs and chicks. Biodegradable 1080 is also extremely effective at controlling other introduced predators such as ship rats and stoats.

Working together for kea

Front of mind is the kea, our endangered native parrot. We operate within the kea habitat code of practice; designed to balance the benefits of aerial 1080 pest control and reducing the risk to kea populations long term. Due to the kea's curious nature, they are at an increased risk of encountering cereal bait pellets, exposing them to the toxin.

OSPRI continues to collaborate with DOC and iwi, and together we look at ways to assess the risks, and benefits, of pest control and the measures to safeguard this native taonga.

Proposed boundary for aerial 1080 control (subject to consultation)
Ure-Medway West 2
Ure-Medway Swale/Kngro Cn
Mead Hill
1068
Kekerengu 6
Clarence West 4
Clarence West 5
Clarence West 3
Kekerengu 1 Ground
The Pikes
1189
Kekerengu 1 Aerial
Hut
Dee Stream
Limburn Stm
Mead Stream
Clarence VRA non-controlled (Awatere)
Clarence West 2
Clarence West 1
Gibson Spur
Gibson Stm
Peninsula
1247
Waiautoa
Totara Saddle
1203
Calf Saddle
Bob Stream
River
Constitution Hill
Constitution Hill Exclusions
Cuckoo Saddle
701
Clarence Reserve North
McLean Stream
Black Hill
1276
Waiautoa River Flats
Clarence East 4
Clarence East 3
Clarence East 5
Washdyke
Saddle Camp
349
Central Clarence
Clarence
HAYCOCK RANGE
Jam Stream
Mackintosh Knob
1502
George Saddle
George Stream
George Spur
Clarence VRA non-controlled (Muzzle)
2311
2283
2414
North Canterbury VRA non-controlled
Te ao Whekere
2590
Batty
2.5
Kilometers
Wakefield
Blenheim
Hector-Ngakawau
TASMAN
Seddon
Westport
Murchison
MARLBOROUGH
Reefton
Blackball
Hanmer Springs
Kaikoura
Culverden
Cheviot
NEW ZEALAND
Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS
Eagle Technology, Land Information New Zealand

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 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 or after two months if 100mm of rain has fallen.

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.

Do not bring dogs into the area until the warning signs have been officially removed.

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.

There is no risk to public drinking water

Biodegradable 1080 is highly soluble and does not persist in water or soil. Local health authorities apply strict conditions to aerial operations so that drinking water supplies are not contaminated. Safety has been confirmed by tests on several thousand water samples taken after aerial 1080 operations over many years.

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

OSPRI
Upper South Island office
PO Box 8674, Riccarton
Christchurch 8440
P 03 363 3090
E vectornsi@ospri.co.nz
W ospri.co.nz

Contractor
Vector Free Marlborough
P 0508 548 008
E communications@vectorfree.co.nz
W vectorfree.co.nz

Links

- Controlling bovine TB and how and why 1080 is used in New Zealand: ospri.co.nz/tb-and-pest-control
- Recreational hunting, 'TB Information for Hunters' factsheet: ospri.co.nz
- Commercial hunting: Ministry for Primary Industries and Department of Conservation websites.