

# BOVINE TB

## POSSUM CONTROL FACTSHEET

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### WHY WORRY ABOUT TB?

Bovine tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease, affecting New Zealand's cattle and deer industries. Most new herd infections are caused by infected wild animals, mainly possums, which spread the disease to farmed cattle and deer. TBfree is a programme of OSPRI and manages the national TB control strategy, which aims to control and eventually eradicate the disease from New Zealand.

### WHY UNDERTAKE POSSUM CONTROL?

Control operations are carried out to eliminate TB from infected possums and reduce infection rates in cattle and deer herds. The objective of this operation is to eradicate any residual traces of TB by reducing possum numbers to low levels in order to break the disease cycle. It is vital that we control and eventually eradicate TB from New Zealand to protect our access to high-value overseas markets for our beef, dairy and deer products.

### HOW THE TBFREE PROGRAMME CONTROLS TB

**WILD ANIMAL CONTROL** – To control and contain the wild animal species responsible for carrying TB and spreading the disease to cattle and deer. Possum control work is carried out mainly using ground-based methods, such as trapping, supported by aerial control using biodegradable sodium fluoroacetate (1080) in some areas.

**DISEASE CONTROL** – To control and contain the spread of the disease within cattle and deer herds through the ongoing testing and slaughter of animals suspected of having TB.

**MOVEMENT CONTROL** – To control the spread of the disease between infected herds and herds in high TB risk areas, supported by herd registration and regulations, such as the correct tagging of stock.

### WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN MANAGING TB?

This combination of possum control, livestock movement restrictions and effective disease management has led to a drop in infected herd numbers from 1700 in the mid-1990s to fewer than 60 in 2017. The long-term goal is to eradicate TB from New Zealand. In order to achieve this, TB-infected possum numbers must be kept low.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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