

National Aerial Operations Plan 2025

This document outlines proposed TBfree aerial possum control operations in 2025.

OSPRI, which manages the TBfree programme, is seeking specific feedback from people and organisations who may be affected by the proposed aerial disease control operations, including landowners and land users, farmers, hunters, and people involved in outdoor recreation.

Details about how to provide feedback are on the back cover, page 16. For further information, go to www.ospri.co.nz/have-your-say.

Please note that specific details and operational boundaries proposed in this document are indicative only and may change as a result of further planning and feedback. Final details will be communicated directly to affected parties, and through letters, public notifications, media and at ospri.co.nz.



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The TBfree programme

The TBfree programme

Possoms are the wildlife source of TB infection in cattle and deer in New Zealand, so possum control is a key activity for the TBfree programme, alongside livestock TB testing and movement control.

The TBfree programme aims to achieve the following:

- livestock is free of TB by 2026,
- possums are free of TB by 2040,
- TB is eradicated from New Zealand by 2050.

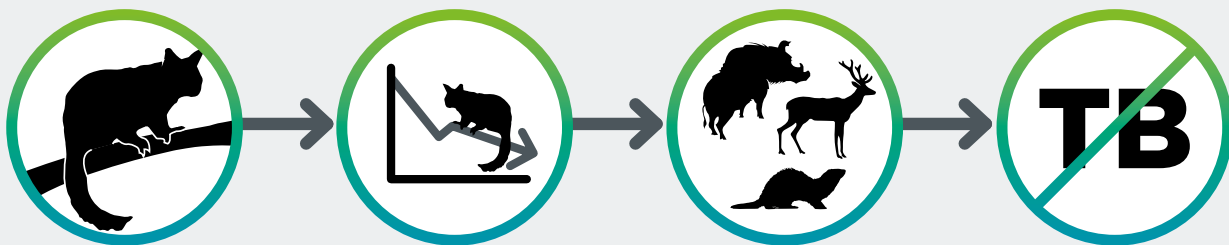
These objectives require maintaining very low possum numbers for significant periods of time through possum control. Most possum control work is ground-based. In some areas, aerial 1080 operations are more cost-effective than other control methods, more efficient or the only effective method available.

As the TBfree programme progresses towards the eradication of TB from wildlife and livestock, possum control methods are constantly assessed and reprioritised to ensure the best use of resources to achieve eradication goals.

The road to TB eradication

OSPRI's operations are time-limited. First, the possum population is reduced to low numbers, sometimes through an aerial operation. It is then maintained at a low level over several years to break the disease cycle.

After control operations, checks are made to see if any TB can still be found in wildlife. If there is none, the area is declared TB free.



Possum control, year one

Possoms spread TB. Getting numbers low will help stop TB.

Keeping possum numbers low

It's really important to keep possum numbers low over multiple years to break the TB cycle.

Testing wildlife

Wildlife is checked for signs of TB.

TB eradicated

There is no need for further control although checks are still made for TB.

Using 1080 for possum control

The careful use of biodegradable 1080 to control possums has been a key tool in significantly reducing TB in cattle and deer herds.

Sodium fluoroacetate (1080) is one of the most widely researched pest control tools. There have been extensive investigations into its use in New Zealand by both the Environmental Protection Agency and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment.

It has proven particularly effective in aerial baiting programmes to control possums over large areas of land or forest, or where the terrain makes access on foot difficult or inefficient.

Conservation and farming leaders have voiced strong support for the continued use of 1080 in New Zealand.

Success to date

- TB eradicated from more than 4.2 million hectares.
- Infected herds reduced to 15 as at 30 June 2024 (down from 695 in 2000).

How we use 1080

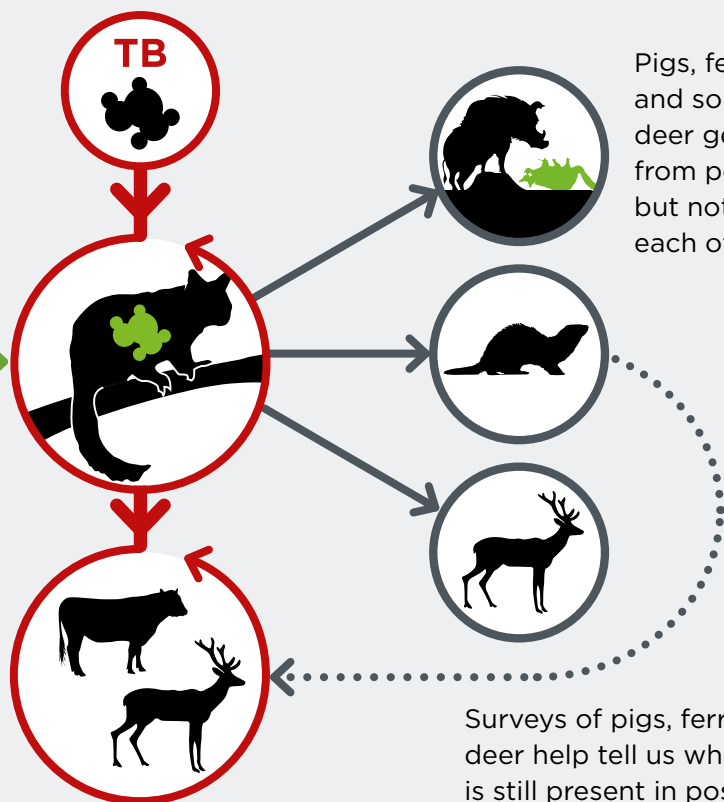
Aerial application of 1080 is the most efficient and cost-effective method for controlling introduced possums and other predators such as rats and stoats over large areas with difficult access. 1080 is the only toxin registered for aerial application that ensures possum numbers are kept low enough to eradicate TB.

How we find and control the TB infection cycle

The **red line** tracks the path of TB infection within the possum population, circulating and infecting maintenance hosts, with a weak link between ferrets and livestock.

Possum control breaks the disease cycle in possums and stops them from infecting farmed cattle/deer.

Possums can maintain TB within their own population and cause about 50% of herd infection cases.



Pigs, ferrets and sometimes deer get TB from possums but not from each other.

Surveys of pigs, ferrets and deer help tell us where TB is still present in possums.

Case study



It takes a team effort

One of our focus areas is Hari Hari/ Waitaha Valley, a small farming community in South Westland, 50km south of Hokitika, nestled between the Southern Alps and Tasman Sea.

The most recent outbreak in Hari Hari dates back four years ago. Since then, there have been a total of 17 herd breakdowns of infection – a quarter of the total herd in the area.

With TB affecting so many in the area, the community has pulled together to tackle the problem. “From the beginning of the outbreak, farmers in Hari Hari were worried about their farms and their neighbours. Not knowing what herds were infected – due to privacy – made many uneasy, but the community support was strong”, says Katrina Simpson, Chair of the West Coast OSPRI farmer committee.

“Farmers made it clear from the start that TB control work had to be a priority and needed to continue until TB was eradicated.”

“OSPRI’s wraparound support for the community, especially the affected farmers, was greatly appreciated.”

Over the past 30 years, there have been outbreaks in the farmland of Hari Hari following a 5-10 year cycle. Prior to the 2019 outbreak, there were no infected herds for four years.

This reoccurring pattern is something Hari Hari dairy farmer, Simon Stewart knows very well. “With all the native bush here, it’s something we’re always aware of. Farmers on the Coast have adapted their farming process for years to manage it. This means the outbreak in Hari Hari didn’t mess with business-as-usual activities although it did impact some bull sales and some grazing for people. It will definitely be a relief not having to worry about TB.”

Kevin Crews, Senior Veterinarian, Disease Management, OSPRI describes the TB bug as resilient. “While we can get temporary relief from the problem, if we haven’t dealt with the source, the bug can sit in the background cycling in possums and can come out again.”

Based on his many years’ experience dealing with TB, Kevin strongly advocates sticking to the tried-and-true recipe of eradicating TB.

“We have over 30 years of applied research on the unique problem we have in our country. If we deal effectively with the possum population, the problem will look after itself.”

In this latest outbreak, OSPRI worked with the community and partner agencies to develop and implement a tailored disease control response plan including herd protection and treatment to surrounding areas of Hari Hari and the Waitaha Valley.

On 16 June of this year, Kevin started his day beaming with joy. On this day he called the last Hari Hari farmer with infected cattle to let them know their herd is TB free. “It’s taken about four years and hundreds of hours of diligent work to reach this point. A wide range of skills and experience is essential and it’s taken a collective effort from many including farmers, vets, suppliers, and regional engagement.”

Kevin fully appreciates the challenge of eradicating TB – control work continues and another round of aerial control will be required in the near future.

“TB has been around for centuries, and it simply doesn’t just disappear without sustained possum control in the correct areas.”

Proposed aerial operations for 2025

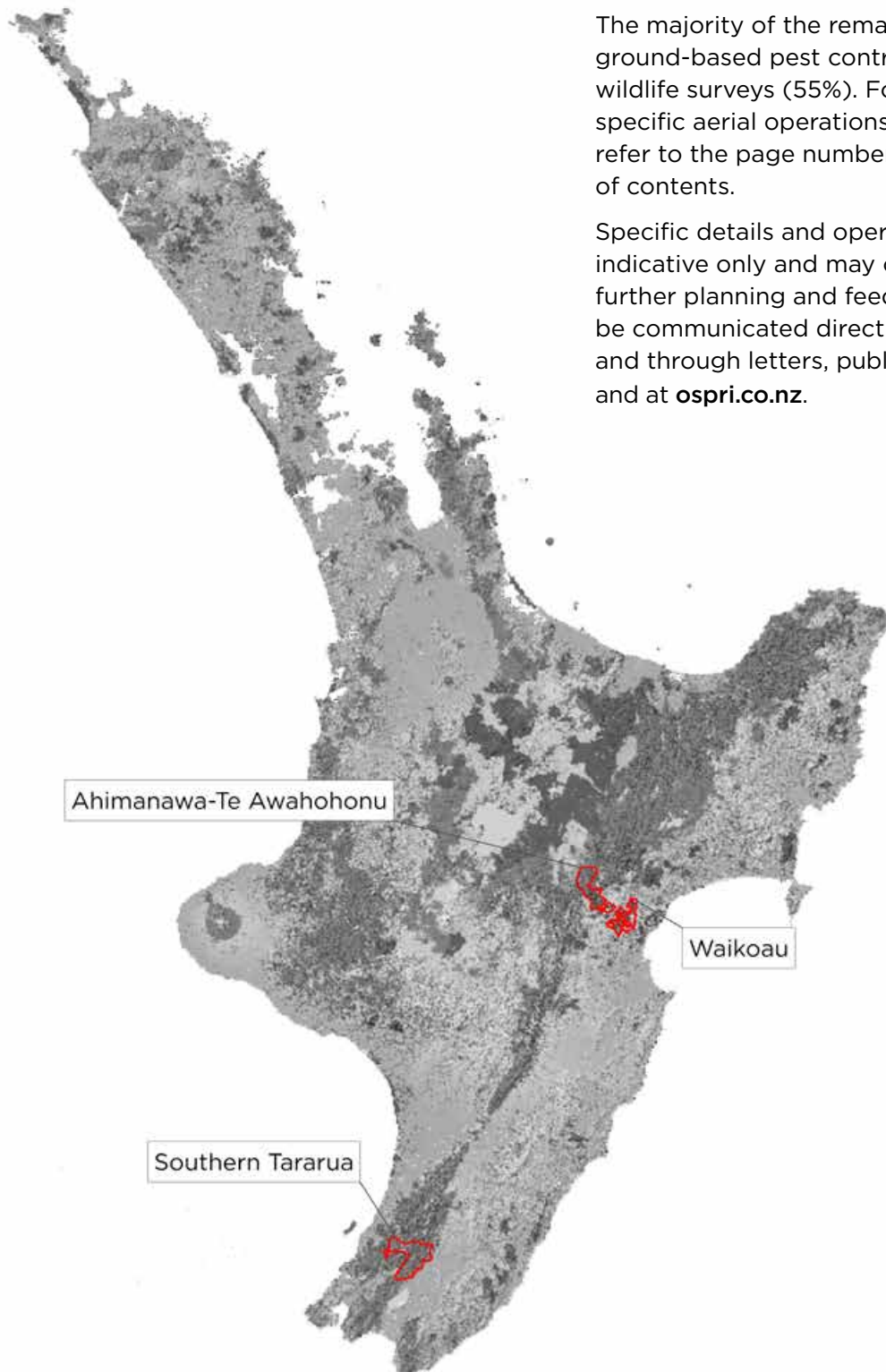
As part of our TBfree programme, we deliver our pest control operations through a framework of TB management areas (TMAs). TMAs are areas with known TB infection in livestock or wildlife. Each TMA has a specific TB control plan designed to eradicate TB as effectively as possible.

The following maps outline the new aerial disease control activities proposed for 2025. Each region has a different disease control focus based on the status of infected herds and wildlife.

In 2025 aerial operations cover about 5% of proposed operational activity.

The majority of the remaining work involves ground-based pest control (40%) and wildlife surveys (55%). For detail on the specific aerial operations proposed, please refer to the page numbers in the table of contents.

Specific details and operational boundaries are indicative only and may change as a result of further planning and feedback. Final details will be communicated directly to affected parties, and through letters, public notifications, media and at [ospri.co.nz](https://www.ospri.co.nz).



Control operations area coverage 2025

Proposed activity	North Island	South Island
Aerial operations	71,630 ha	23,000 ha*

* Proposed from January 2026



Regional overviews

North Island

Aerial control is proposed in 2025 for Southern Tararua within the Central Wairarapa TMA.

The Central Wairarapa TMA has an extensive history of TB in cattle and deer herds with a high number of infected herds in the 1990's and early 2000's. Infected wildlife have been found in the area with several TB infected possums and ferrets caught adjacent to Lake Wairarapa and close to the Tararua and Remutaka Ranges. TB infected ferrets and possums have also been caught in the Ponatahi Longbush area and TB wild pigs caught in the Tararua foothills.

While infection in livestock within the Southern Tararua area has been low and sporadic since the late 1990s, possum control within this area will provide a necessary buffer between the area where TB-infected wildlife can be found, and intensively farmed areas.

The area captures a special habitat for Kākā and other threatened native birds and wildlife that are actively conserved by the Department of Conservation's (DOC) National Predator Control Programme, Project Kākā. Our operation aligns with DOC's work to improve biodiversity in this special area as well as support significant progress towards achieving TB freedom in the region.

Aerial control is also proposed in 2025 for Ahimanawa-Te Awahohonu and Waikoau within the Tutaekuri-Waitara and Waipunga TMAs in the Hawke's Bay.

Since the detection of TB in livestock within the Hawke's Bay region in 2019, the number of infected herds has greatly reduced thanks to extensive control efforts within this region. To build on this important work, we are proposing to complete the Ahimanawa-Te Awahohonu and Waikoau operations in the coming year. Both operations complement ongoing ground control programmes and are necessary to achieve the low possum populations needed to eliminate TB within this region.

South Island

There are currently no planned aerial operations in the South Island for the 2025 calendar year. Due to the proposed timing of the Upper Wanganui operation from January 2026 it has been included for consultation in this document.

The planned aerial programme for the northern half of the South Island is nearing completion with most high-risk sites having received required treatment. Aerial control first commenced in 2022 for the Upper Wanganui, Wilburg Range, and Upper Taipo and Upper Waitaha blocks.

A second aerial treatment is proposed for the Upper Wanganui catchment. This area is the proven source area for TB infection impacting herds through the downstream Hari Hari farmland. Further control is necessary to protect herds and support the valuable gains made to date in the region.

Feedback from communities


This summary of OSPRI's proposed aerial pest management programme for 2025 has been prepared to give interested and affected parties an opportunity to provide feedback about the parameters of the operations, such as the possibility of using deer repellent, boundaries and the timing of the operation from a seasonal perspective.

OSPRI makes informed decisions by assessing feedback about the parameters of the operations, not the methodology or the use of 1080. While OSPRI is not responsible for regulation of 1080 all its operations are subject to regulations administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Opportunities for feedback

We are keen to listen to the views of all communities interested in the proposed aerial programme across New Zealand. The areas of operation are detailed in the next section of this document, and input is encouraged on the form at the back of this document.

North Island aerial operations 2025



Ahimanawa-Te Awahohonu

The proposed timing for this operation is from July 2025.

Terrain and operational area

This operation joins the Te Awahohonu and Ahimanawa operations to create an operational area of approximately 27,500 ha.

The Te Awahohonu operation is located approximately 55 km north-west of Napier at Te Haroto, the area extends over both sides of the Napier/Taupo highway encompassing a large area of commercial forestry as well as native bush reserves, managed by DOC. The terrain is moderate to very steep and access is via private forestry roads that are locked when not in use.

The block is used for hunting both deer and pigs and entry is managed through a ballot system for permits.

Adjoining Te Awahohonu on its western side, Ahimanawa/Takahiapo blocks are comprised of both DOC and private trust land. The country is steep, covered with native forest and normal access for hunting blocks is by helicopter.

Deer hunting is the main activity in this area and fishing is also popular. Access within these blocks is hampered by bush damage from a heavy snowfall in 2017 and slips and infrastructure damage from Cyclone Gabrielle in early 2023.

TB management area

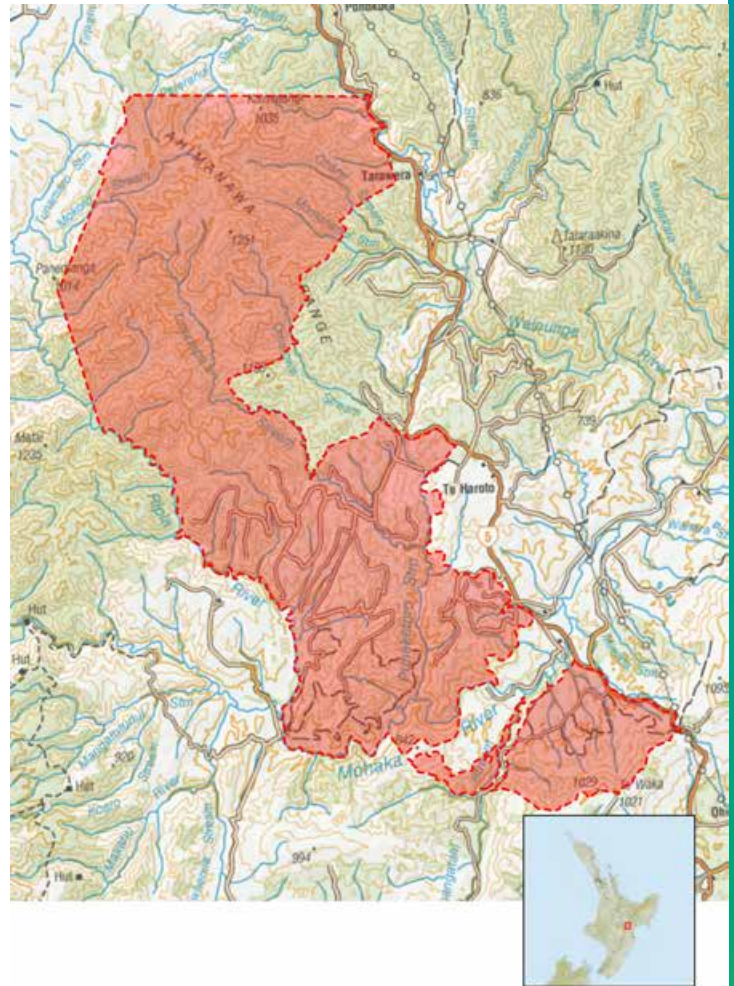
The planned operational areas are within the Tutaekuri-Waitara and Waipunga TMAs in the Hawke's Bay.

Consultation and collaboration

Consultation with mana whenua, landowners and DOC has commenced for this operation. Conversations with other interested stakeholders are ongoing.

Recent TB infection history

TB-infected pigs were found very close to this operational area in 2018 and recent TB cases have been found in herds in the area. Control here is vital to control the spread of TB throughout the herds and wildlife in the region.



Operational control method preferred

The last aerial control operation in this area was completed in 2020. Possum numbers have likely recovered, and further work is required to keep numbers low enough to support TB eradication and neighbouring areas.

The large size of the block, the steep terrain, and the dense bush cover make aerial 1080 the most effective control method for the area.

This is a popular area for hunting and fishing, and public notices and early warning signage will be essential to managing this. There are a number of water catchments, in the way of rivers and streams scattered throughout the operational area as well as potable water being taken from some of these sources. OSPRI will work with the Public Health Officer and landowners to determine where water testing will need to occur and where required supplementary drinking water will need to be supplied.

Waikoau

The proposed timing for this operation is from July 2025.

Terrain and operational area

The Waikoau aerial area is almost entirely made up of a mixture of exotic forestry, private farming and a very small amount of public conservation land. Most of the area consists of a broad range of terrain from flat through to moderate and steep contour at varying elevations under 1000m. This includes several deep ravines and gorges that are both difficult and too dangerous to access by ground means. There are also multiple waterways throughout.

This entire area was impacted during Cyclone Gabrielle, with numerous slips and damage to infrastructure that in some cases, remains unusable or under repair restricting access.

TB management area

The planned operational areas are within the East Coast TMA.

Consultation and collaboration

This operation is within the Hawke's Bay Regional Council's (HBRC) possum control programme. OSPRI and HBRC are working with each other to ensure the landowners in this area are informed about the two separate programmes.

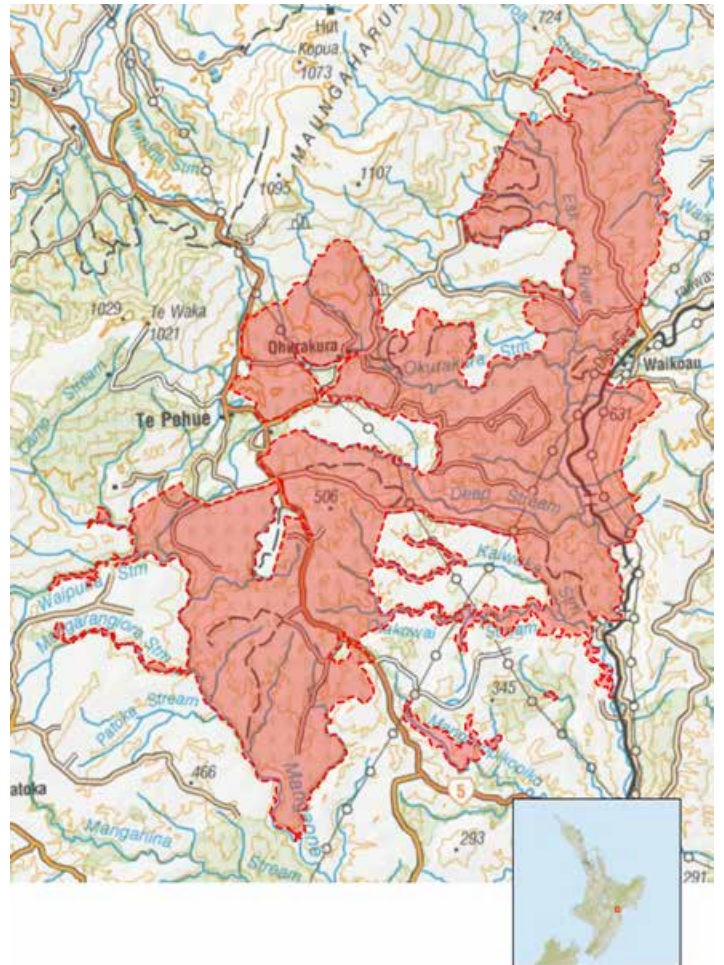
Consultation with the private landowners has been ongoing since control work commenced in the area in 2019 communication with these landowners is ongoing. Consultation with other interested stakeholders and community groups is also currently in progress.

Recent TB infection history

A ferret tested positive for TB in the adjacent Matahorua area in 2019. The DNA of the infection matches all other cases of TB found in Hawke's Bay area, with some infected farms near the proposed treatment area.

Operational control method preferred

The last aerial control was completed in Waikoau in 2021. Possums numbers have



since recovered and further work is required to keep numbers low enough to support TB eradication and neighbouring areas.

Ground access to much of this operational area is greatly limited by the overall ruggedness of the terrain and the additional effects of damage caused during Cyclone Gabrielle. This large area, with its dense bush habitat and deep gorges makes ground access virtually impossible, meaning aerial control is essential.

There are a number of water catchments, in the way of rivers and streams scattered throughout the operational area as well as potable water being taken from some of these sources. Accordingly, water sampling will be necessary if requested and supplementary water supplies may also be appropriate for a short period. As this is largely a farming area, there is strong support to these operations.

Southern Tararua

The proposed timing for this operation is from August 2025.

Terrain and operational area

The Southern Tararua operational area covers approximately 31,000 ha from the western side of the Tararua Range near Kāpiti Coast to the eastern side of the Tararua Range directly west of the Featherston, Greytown and Carterton townships.

Habitat cover within the operational area is a mix of alpine tussock grasslands, sub-alpine shrublands, lowland broadleaf forest with emergent podocarps, and beech forest.

The majority of this area encompasses Public Conservation Land administered by DOC. The northern operational boundary is next to DOC's Project Kākā. It is expected that the two operations will be run simultaneously for operational efficiency and benefit native species by removing predators from the Southern sections of the Tararua Forest Park.

TB management area

The planned operational areas are within the Southern Tararua TMA.

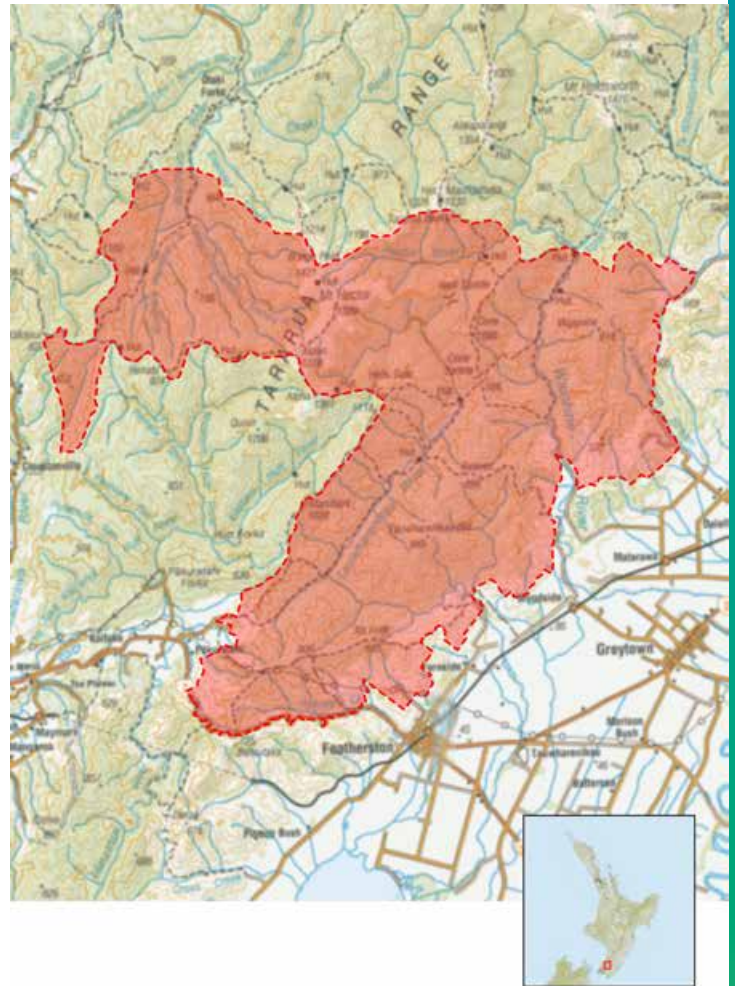
Consultation and collaboration

This will be the first time that OSPRI has undertaken work in the proposed operational area.

Consultation is currently under way with landowners, mana whenua and interested stakeholders including DOC and NZDA.

Recent TB infection history

Infected livestock herds, and wildlife (possums and ferrets) have been found either side of the Tararua Range. Pigs infected with TB were caught in the Ōtaki Buffer in 2008 and in the Mt Bruce to Mikimiki Crown areas in 2012.




Operational control method preferred

The large size of the block, the steep terrain, and the dense bush cover make aerial control the most effective control method for the area.

This is a popular area for hunting and hiking, and public notices and early warning signage will be erected at all entry points to notify the public as the operation progresses.

There are a number of water catchments, in the way of rivers and streams scattered throughout the operational area as well as potable water being taken from some of these sources. Accordingly, water sampling will be necessary if requested and supplementary water supplies may also be appropriate for a period.

South Island aerial operations 2025



Upper Wanganui

The proposed timing for this operation is from January 2026.

Terrain and operational area

One project will be carried out in three operational areas consisting of the Upper Wanganui, Wilburg Range and Upper Waitaha. These are the aerial blocks which border the Hari Hari TMA. The blocks are interspersed with high alpine altitude Vector Free Area. The areas encompass the TB hotspot that is the Wanganui River as well as the headwaters of the Poerua and Waitaha Rivers.

DOC huts and walking tracks exist within the area which may need to be excluded and then assessed for vector presence.

TB management area

The planned operational areas are within the South Westland Alps TMA.

Consultation and collaboration

When this operation was last undertaken in 2022, OSPRI collaborated with Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research (MWLR), DOC and the Kea Conservation Trust to mitigate adverse risk to local Kea population including bait aversion training.

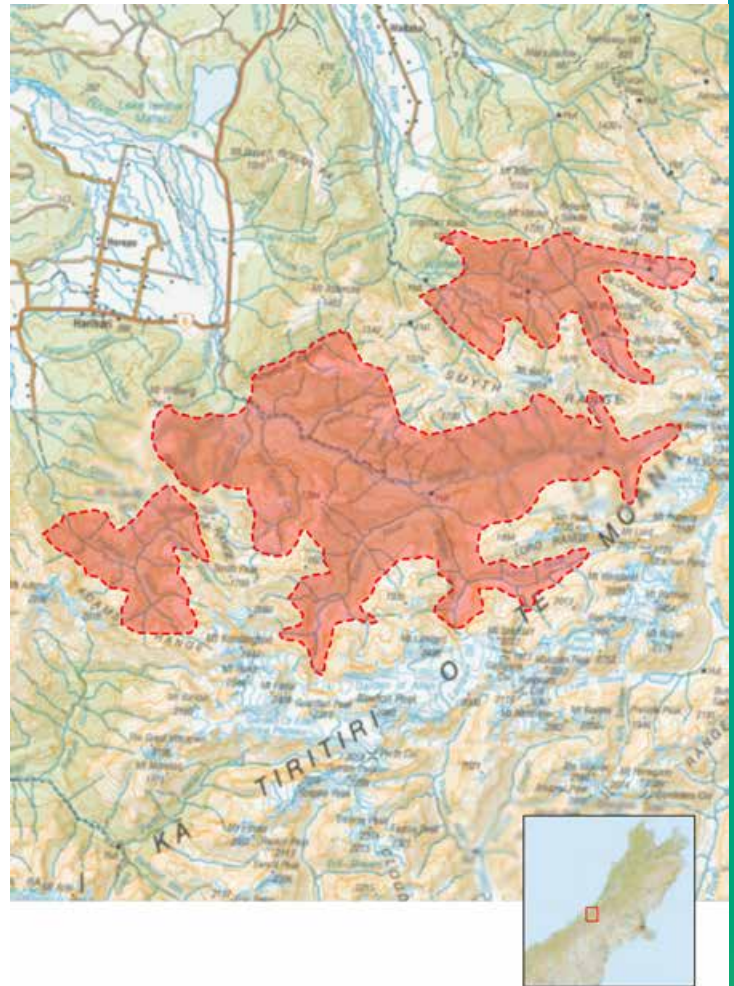
OSPRI has notified DOC of upcoming aerial control plans and will work closely with their technical advisors to help ensure Kea survival is optimised for this second round of treatment.

Recent TB infection history

TB infected possums were found up the Wanganui River in 2021 along with TB infected deer identified via WARO activity in 2018. Evidence suggests the Upper Wanganui is the source of infection for herds within the Hari Hari TMA.

Operational control method preferred

To prevent further herd breakdowns in the Hari Hari and Waitaha farmlands, possum populations must be held low for several years. The Upper Wanganui aerial will further



reduce possum numbers and build on the gains already achieved to move closer to TB freedom on the Coast.

Whilst much of the highest altitude country has been excluded based on lack of possum habitat, the remaining area is steep and rugged. With TB proven to be present in wildlife in the area, it is vital that complete coverage is achieved through at least two rounds of control. Aerial control is the most effective way in reducing the possum population as it allows for consistent rates of application in terrain that is otherwise too dangerous and/or costly to effectively controlled using ground-based methods.

The Upper Wanganui aerial falls within scrounge Kea habitat and early consultation with DOC technical advisors will enable correct mitigations are in place.

Huts and water supplies will be excluded as per landowner and Public Health Unit requirements.

Have your say

We invite feedback on our 2025 national plan for TBfree pest control operations. We are seeking feedback specifically on the nature, boundaries and timing of proposed operations.

We are not seeking feedback on wider issues such as the purposes of the TBfree programme or the use of 1080 for pest control in New Zealand.

OSPRI encourages engagement with interested communities and those affected by proposed TBfree operations, and invites input on this document until **30 September 2024** through several channels:

- By email to consultation@ospri.co.nz
- By post to National TBfree Operations Consultation, PO Box 3412, Wellington 6140
- By phone on 0800 482 463
- By completing the form at www.ospri.co.nz/have-your-say website.

Please use the form below to submit your feedback on any of the proposed pest control operations outlined in this document. Threatening or abusive submissions will not be responded to and where necessary will be referred to the appropriate authorities.

Your feedback may become publicly available information. For this reason, please indicate clearly if your comments are commercially sensitive or if, for some other reason, you do not consider that they should be disclosed. Any request for non-disclosure will be considered under the Official Information Act 1982 and the Privacy Act 1993.

Your feedback will be used to help inform the final proposals. Thank you.

Name

Position and organisation

Area of interest (farmer, hunter, etc)

Phone

Email

Postal address

1. What is the proposed aerial operation/s you are commenting on?

2. What is the primary subject of your feedback?

- Timings of proposed operation Other (please state):
- Boundaries
- Impact on business or commercial activity
- General operational concerns

3. Please outline your feedback (attach additional feedback as required)