

# AERIAL TB CONTROL OPERATION MOUNT GOLD 2016

## OSPRI'S TBFREE PROGRAMME

OSPRI's TBfree programme aims to manage and eventually eradicate bovine tuberculosis (TB) from New Zealand's farmed cattle and deer and wild animal populations. To achieve this objective, OSPRI uses possum control, along with regular herd testing and movement restrictions. Scientific evidence shows that TB-infected wildlife are responsible for the majority of new herd infections in Central Otago.

Possum control has dramatically reduced the number of infected herds in the Upper Clutha to one infected herd as at October 2015. Controlling the disease prevents livestock production losses and protects the world-leading reputation of New Zealand's deer, dairy and beef products.

Information gathered from wild animal surveys, recent local herd infections and the pest control history of the region has been used to plan the Mount Gold aerial operation. The Mount Gold area was last aurally treated in 2009.



## TARGETING POSSUMS

The Mount Gold aerial operation covers land south of the 'Hawea Neck' which is an important buffer between



the TB-infected areas of Upper Clutha and the disease-free Mount Aspiring National Park and beyond. Possums are known to inhabit the steep beech/tawhai forest, scrubby gullies, rocky outcrops and alpine tussock grassland of the operational area.

To eradicate bovine TB, possum numbers need to be kept extremely

low – around one to two animals every ten hectares. Monitoring of parts of the operational area in March 2014 showed that possum numbers were approximately double the levels required to eradicate TB. Further possum control is needed to reduce their population and minimise the chance of possums interacting and spreading TB to each other.



## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE OPERATION

The Mount Gold aerial is scheduled to take place in autumn / winter 2016, depending on the weather, and will cover approximately 4,450 hectares.

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 four weeks later (weather permitting), toxic, green cereal pellets coated with deer repellent – each containing 0.15% biodegradable sodium fluoroacetate (also known as 1080) – will be applied by helicopter at a rate of 1.5 kilograms per hectare. That's about one bait to every 80 square metres. The deer repellent coating turns the green bait a brownish-green colour.

The Mount Gold operation will be subject to strict safety, quality-assurance and monitoring requirements. Advanced GPS



navigation equipment will be used to ensure the pellets are accurately placed and identified exclusion zones are avoided. The aerial will not take place in high winds.

## THE METHOD

The Mount Gold aerial operation is a small part of the wider Upper Clutha pest control programme which is currently underway. The majority of possum control is done by local contractors using ground-based traps and hand-laid toxins. The remaining area is controlled using aerially applied pellets containing biodegradable 1080.

Aerial control is highly-efficient, cost-effective and has been extremely successful at knocking possum numbers down to the very low levels needed to eradicate TB from wildlife and declare areas free of TB. It is preferred in areas like Mount Gold as it gets bait into areas where ground-based toxin and trapping operations haven't been able to due to steepness, extent, timing or health and safety reasons.

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment 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.

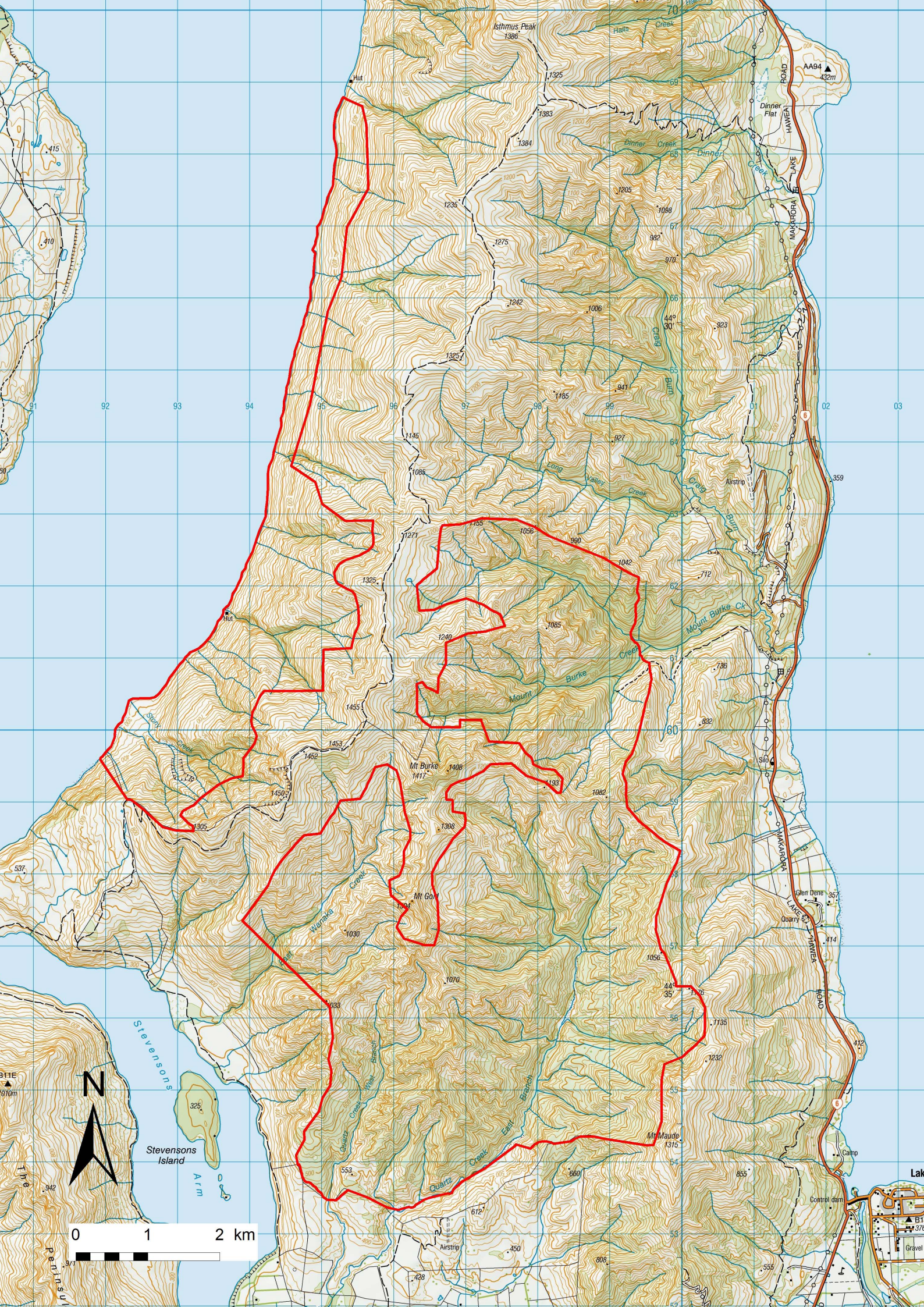
Please visit [pce.parliament.nz](http://pce.parliament.nz) to read this report.

## WHAT HAPPENS NOW

All landowners/occupiers within and adjacent to the proposed control area will be contacted and visited by TBfree contractors well ahead of the operation. They will discuss boundary issues, water supply safety and the management of any risks to dogs and livestock. Consents from Otago Regional Council, the Department of Conservation and Ministry of Health are required for this operation. Affected landowners and occupiers will be contacted again within 24-48 hours of the operation starting, 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 wildlife. Possums inhabit high country alpine environments and prey on native animals. Biodegradable 1080 is also extremely effective at controlling other introduced predators which destroy our native species, such as ship rats and stoats.



# 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 and coated in brownish green deer repellent.

**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 baits or animals. When the signs are officially removed, you can resume normal activities in the area. If you have concerns about your dog, please contact the contractor.



**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.



## 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 Southern South Island office**

PO Box 5745  
Dunedin 9058  
**P** 03 955 5850  
**E** [cr\\_ssi@ospri.co.nz](mailto:cr_ssi@ospri.co.nz)  
[tbfree.co.nz](http://tbfree.co.nz) | [ospri.co.nz](http://ospri.co.nz)

### Contractor

Vector Control Services  
Aerial Co-ordinator  
**P** 03 768 9674  
**E** [vcs@xtra.co.nz](mailto:vcs@xtra.co.nz)  
[vcs.net.nz](http://vcs.net.nz)

**For more information on controlling bovine TB and why 1080 is used in New Zealand, visit [1080facts.co.nz](http://1080facts.co.nz)**



## 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.