

TBFREE WORKING IN THE CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND

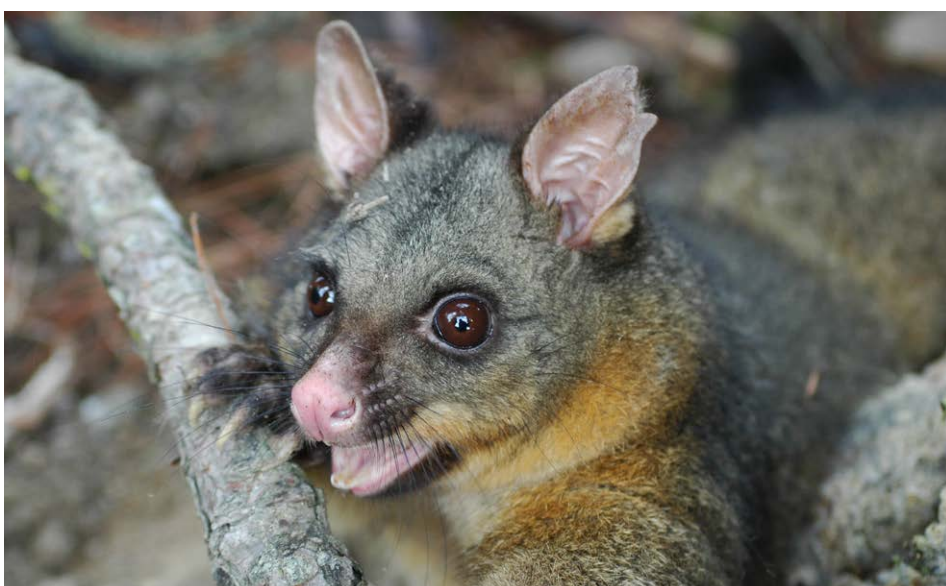
In New Zealand possums are the primary maintenance host for bovine tuberculosis (TB) and can transmit disease to other wildlife and livestock. Possums are a focus of the TBfree pest control programme in areas where the disease is present, using traps or through the use of toxins applied aerially or by ground control. History has shown if the disease isn't controlled in possums it spreads geographically through possum populations and can infect wild animals such as pigs, deer and ferrets and potentially neighbouring cattle and deer herds

WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

TB is regarded as a serious disease around the world in animals and humans. This disease is zoonotic, which means it can pass from animals to humans. In New Zealand, in addition to human health, TB potentially can have a damaging effect to the health and performance of livestock. This disease can create a negative consumer perception and if not controlled can adversely affect our dairy, beef and deer export markets.

DOES TB IMPACT DEER

Yes, deer can carry TB infection for up to 15 years without it being externally visible unlike possums which mostly die within 6 months of becoming infected. This makes it possible for TB to be eradicated from a local possum population within five years of possum control being started by keeping the



possum population very low, but TB infection can potentially live on in deer for another decade. The problem is that if possum control is stopped after five to ten years, possum numbers can increase back to the levels at which TB can persist before the last infected deer dies. This creates a risk that TB can spill back into possum populations through scavenging on the infected deer. As a consequence, possum control has to be maintained for at least a decade in areas where infected deer may be present to minimise this risk.

WHY GREATER PEST (POSSUM) MANAGEMENT IN THE CENTRAL NI?

Following a TB plan review in 2015 which concluded TB eradication from

possums in large areas of contiguous bush habitat was possible, a revised TB plan was formed with the key objectives of;

- TB freedom in livestock by 2026
- TB freedom in possums by 2040
- Biological eradication of TB from New Zealand by 2055.

The new objectives are included in the National TB Pest Management Plan under the Biosecurity Act 1993, for which TBfree is the Management Agent on behalf of the Government, and the Dairy, Beef and Deer industries. Under the previous plan many areas, including the Central North Island, were not controlled to the level for eradication of TB in possums, but instead buffer operations were completed to contain the disease, minimising the spread to herds whilst TB freedom was pursued in other parts of the country.



Now, there is a need to manage all areas in New Zealand, with an ultimate focus on eradication, where TB is potentially maintained in the wildlife population (Vector Risk Areas – VRA).

Historically, TB has been identified in a number of locations throughout the Central North Island in both livestock herds as well as wildlife. To achieve TB freedom in possums, the combination of control history, livestock TB surveillance and wild animal surveys (collection and testing wildlife for TB) are used to provide data to give veterinary epidemiologists the confidence to declare a possum population in a defined geographic area free of the disease.

In the Central North Island there is insufficient data to prove *the absence of TB* in the possum population in the operational area (through lack of possum control or livestock/wild animal surveillance data), therefore a plan to undertake possum control and/or wild animal surveillance has been created.

WHAT DOES PEST MANAGEMENT INVOLVE?

In the majority of land proposed for control in the Central North Island, aerial application of 1080 will be required as well as surveillance in certain areas to detect if there is TB in wildlife.

Aerial 1080 control of possums is required to manage TB in areas that

are difficult, unsafe or too extensive to control by ground. Deer repellent will be applied to bait, to minimise the loss of deer, noting that these areas include known sika deer locations. The use of deer repellent for aerial control is considered on a case by case basis because of the considerable additional cost of application.

Surveillance work of deer and other wildlife in some areas of the Central North Island will be done to determine the TB disease status. An example of this is the Kaimanawa survey (factsheet available at ospri.co.nz). This survey design took into account the large deer population present and was timed and located to reduce impact on recreational hunters and has been designed in consultation with representatives of local interested hunting groups.

In areas where aerial control is found not to be feasible or possible, some ground control maybe required.

More detail on TB Management in specific areas can be found at:
www.tbfree.org.nz/tb-management-areas.aspx

WHAT CONSULTATION DOES TBFREE DO?

When planning control work, there is a 12–24 month process that TBfree works through for any one operation.

During this process, TBfree request feedback through the TBfree National Pest Control Operations Consultation Document, which is released annually in the second half of the year and is open for all affected or interested parties. This document is sent to over 300 organisations and individuals inviting feedback submissions and includes deer stalkers, Game Animal Council and the Department of Conservation.

At a local level, TBfree staff and contractors meet and receive feedback from Iwi, Regional Councils, affected landowners (including DOC if required), affected parties (including users of the land) and adjacent land owners. Based on this feedback, changes are often made, which can include the control operational timing, boundary changes and whether the use of deer repellent is required.



FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information visit
ospri.co.nz

If you have questions
call OSPRI on

0800 482 463