



# BIOSECURITY ANIMALS

## 1 ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

1.1.1 The Biosecurity Animals Activity delivers work across programmes to protect both production and biodiversity values including:

- The Possum Control Programme;
- The Rook Control Programme; and
- The Amenity Pests Programme

1.1.2 The Activity links with a range of national and regional policies and strategies including the Biosecurity Act 1993, National Policy Direction 2015 and Regional Pest Management Plan 2017-37.

## 2 ANNUAL PLAN TARGETS

2.1.1 A summary of the Annual Plan targets and progress to date is provided in Table 1

Table 1 Progress reporting for the Biosecurity Animals Annual Plan targets for 2020-21.

Performance measure/ contract target	Target	Progress
Possum densities are maintained at/below 10% <b>residual trap catch</b> (RTC) in all existing and new possum control operations. This is to enhance production, biodiversity, disease protection, and amenity values.	<10% RTC	12 of the planned 38 monitors were completed during the year. The average result for the 12 monitors was 3.1% RTC (+/-1.3%).
Additional hectares included in [the Possum] Control Programme	6,217 ha	13,820 new hectares were completed during the reporting period.
All known rookeries are treated annually to reduce crop losses and damage.	100%	Surveillance and baiting preparation underway
Provide an urban/peri-urban animal pest management service to assist ratepayers with specialist advice and equipment. All enquiries responded to within two working days.	100%	319 enquiries were received during the reporting period. All enquiries were followed up within the agreed timeframes.

## 3 POSSUM CONTROL PROGRAMME

### 3.1 Programme overview

- 3.1.1 The Manawatū-Whanganui Region Possum Control Programme aims to maintain the possum population below a target of 10% **residual trap catch** (RTC) within the area of the programme, consistent with the Regional Pest Management Plan targets. The possum programme started in 2006, covering 110,000 ha, and has grown every year to include more land. Horizons has initiated control in some areas and in others has taken on new areas where the previous possum control organization, OSPRI, had initiated work for the control and eradication of Bovine TB. Horizons has, and continues to absorb the areas into its possum control programme following OSPRI ceasing control of particular areas. The Horizons programme is delivered by a combination of council staff (approximately 65%) and external contractors (approximately 35%).
- 3.1.2 In 2020-21 the voluntary possum control programme spans a total area of 1,574,465 ha (approximately 70% of Horizons' region). The total possum control area continues to grow annually as Horizons takes over where OSPRI achieves freedom from Bovine TB in areas it has previously controlled, and then ceases further pest control. Within the area of the programme in 2020-21:
- Landowners have opted out of 79,174 ha (5%) of the programme;
  - 6,217 ha not previously controlled by Horizons (ex-OSPRI) is being added to the programme.
  - 865,655 ha (55.2% of the total area) is scheduled for maintenance control, i.e. areas that previously have been under Horizons control and will receive bait station fills this year;
  - 556,701 ha (35.5%) of the programme area is being deferred from control due to low possum numbers indicated by the monitoring programme and the projected numbers derived from a population modelling app (PosSim) that assists programme management decision-making.
- 3.1.3 The 2020-21 possum control programme is made up of a total of 153 **Possum Control Operations** (PCOs). The monitoring programme measures possum abundance in 25% of the PCOs to inform decision-making about areas for control, and over a four-year period each of the PCOs is monitored at least once. The growing area of the programme also increases the monitoring programme requirements to ensure each PCO is monitored at least once every four years.
- 3.1.4 Of a possible 153 PCOs, 87 are being worked this year (2020-21) with 66 deferred due to low possum abundance. Of the 87 PCOs being worked, 57 are being completed by Horizons staff and 30 by external contractors.

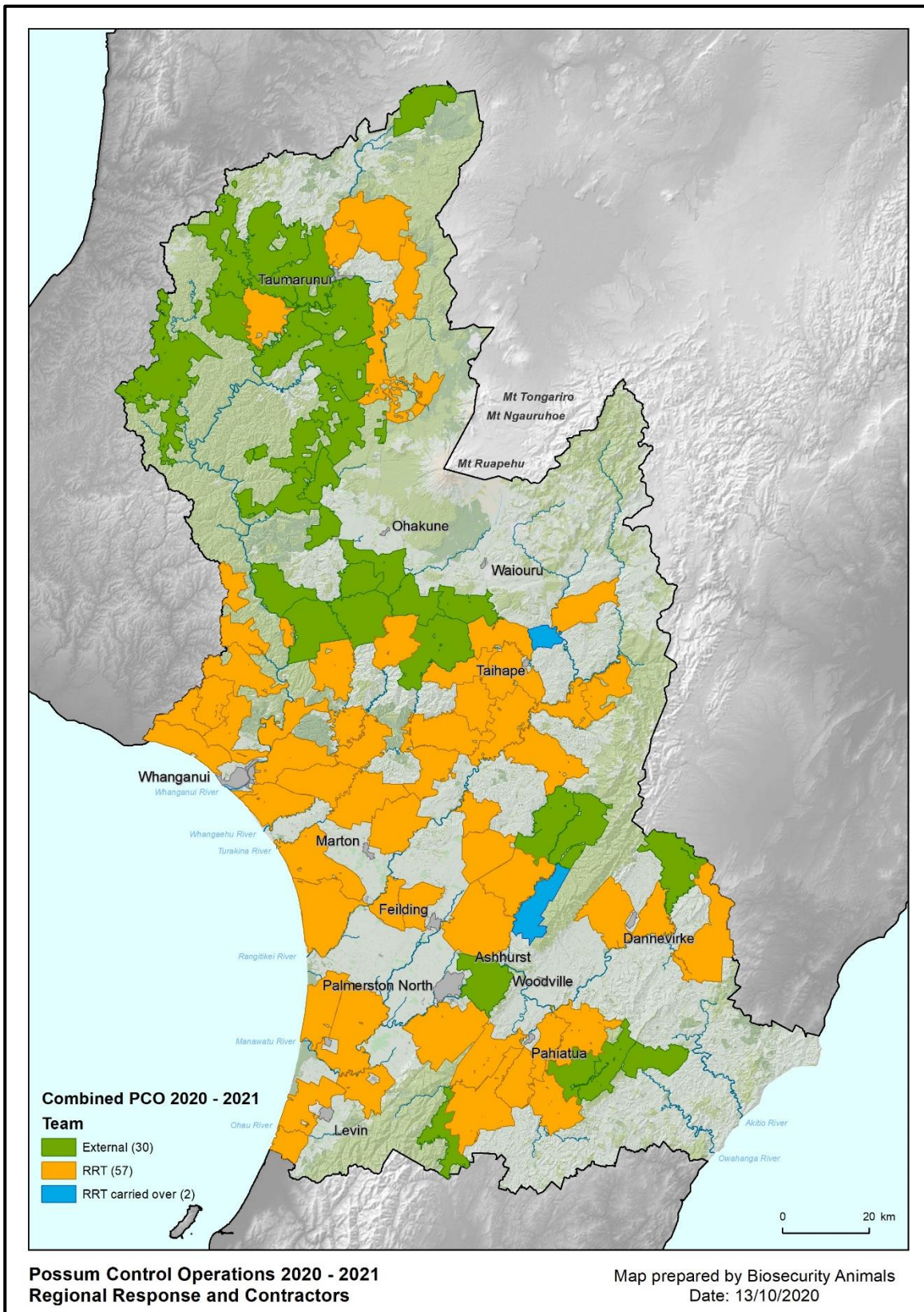
- 3.1.5 As outlined in the Operational Plan the team are reviewing each PCO being worked this year, analysing results and installing further bait stations where required. The team are also seeking landowners who have previously opted out of the voluntary programme to persuade them to opt in and provide more complete coverage of the region. Following on from last year the programme enables the team to identify and action second fills of bait stations where high possum abundance is encountered.
- 3.1.6 Landcare Research has been engaged to provide advice regarding the thresholds of possum abundance linked with the size and type of habitat that could trigger Good Neighbour Rules in Horizons' **Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP) 2017-37**. This will provide guidelines that will assist when assessing landowners with higher possum abundance than their adjoining neighbouring properties, and the level that will trigger a regulatory response. This advice has been received and is being considered by staff, and a summary of the report will be presented to Council at a future date.

## 3.2 Activity update

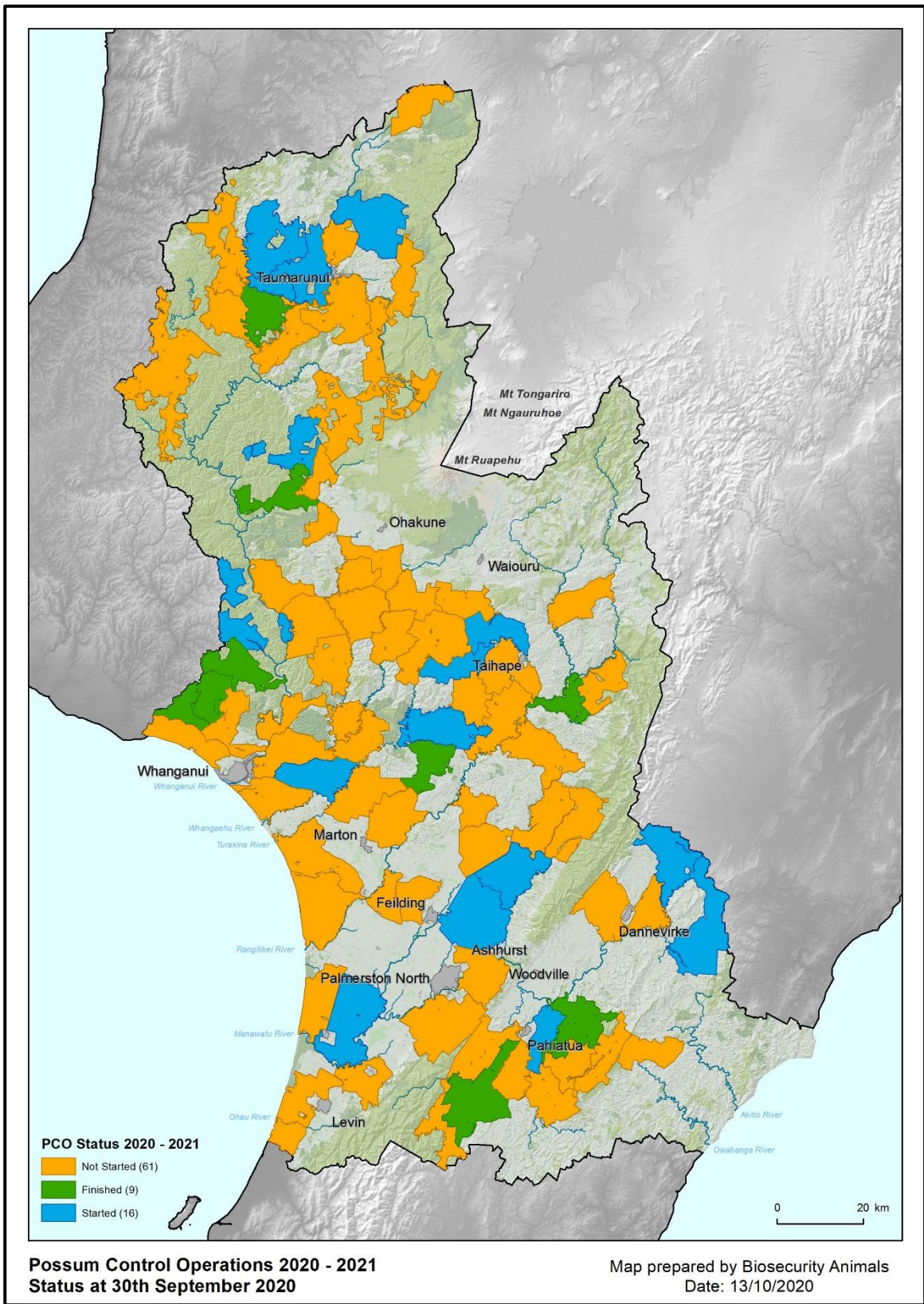
- 3.2.1 The Regional Response Team (RRT) have carried forward two PCOs planned for last financial year that are almost completed and awaiting a couple of properties to finish lambing to enable access.
- 3.2.2 Of the 57 PCOs planned for RRT this year, eight are completed with another 12 started, most of which have almost completed treatment. As expected at this time of the year, lambing means some PCOs cannot be completed in a single attempt and return visits to later lambing properties are required.
- 3.2.3 The external contractors have made a good start to the year, with operational work commencing a lot earlier than in previous years. One new PCO (Ruatiti Stage One) has been completed and work is approximately 50% complete in another PCO.
- 3.2.4 Work is also underway in three maintenance PCOs – Norsewood, Taumarunui Rollback South and Niho Niho.
- 3.2.5 The procurement process to select the contractors for the next three years of PCO work is about to commence. Staff aim to have this process completed in March-April 2021.
- 3.2.6 Horizons have met with the Department of Conservation on several occasions and are encouraging further possum control on conservation land via the Kaimahi for Nature programme that has Covid-19 recovery funding allocated to it for additional work in the region.

Table 2 Progress reporting for the Possum Control Programme against Operational Plan targets.

Measure Hectares	Reporting Period				Total	Operational Plan Target	% Complete	Comment
	Period 1 July – Sept	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4				
<b>Regional Response Team</b>								
PCOs completed	8				8	57	14%	On track
New hectares completed	1,620				1,620	41,423	4%	On track
Bait stations	14,158				14,158	62,014	23%	On track
<b>External Contractors</b>								
PCOs completed	1				1	30	3%	On track
New hectares completed	12,200				12,200	40,462	30%	On track
Bait stations	6,967				6,967	49,362	14%	On track
<b>Total PCO Programme</b>								
PCOs completed	8				8	87	9%	On track
New hectares completed	13,820				13,820	81,885	17%	On track, Annual Plan target of 6,217 ha met
Bait stations	21,125				21,125	111,376	19%	On track



Map 1 Possum Control Combined Operations



Map 2 Status of Possum Control Operations

## 4 MONITORING

### 4.1 Possum Monitoring

- 4.1.1 The Possum Monitoring Programme aims to monitor all PCOs during a four-year period to provide an index of possum abundance; this is year three of the programme.
- 4.1.2 The monitoring programme operators put out 25 lines of 10 wax-tags (250 wax-tags) per PCO and the number of bite marks gives an index of the possum abundance as a percentage. The monitoring lines are randomly selected to remove bias and to provide a robust estimate. (The results are presented with a 95% confidence interval which is the range of values that provide 95% certainty it contains the true mean of the population).
- 4.1.3 The monitoring is predominately done by an independent contractor who is not involved in any of the control work. Some internal team members monitor the possum control work completed by external contractors.

### 4.2 Activity Update

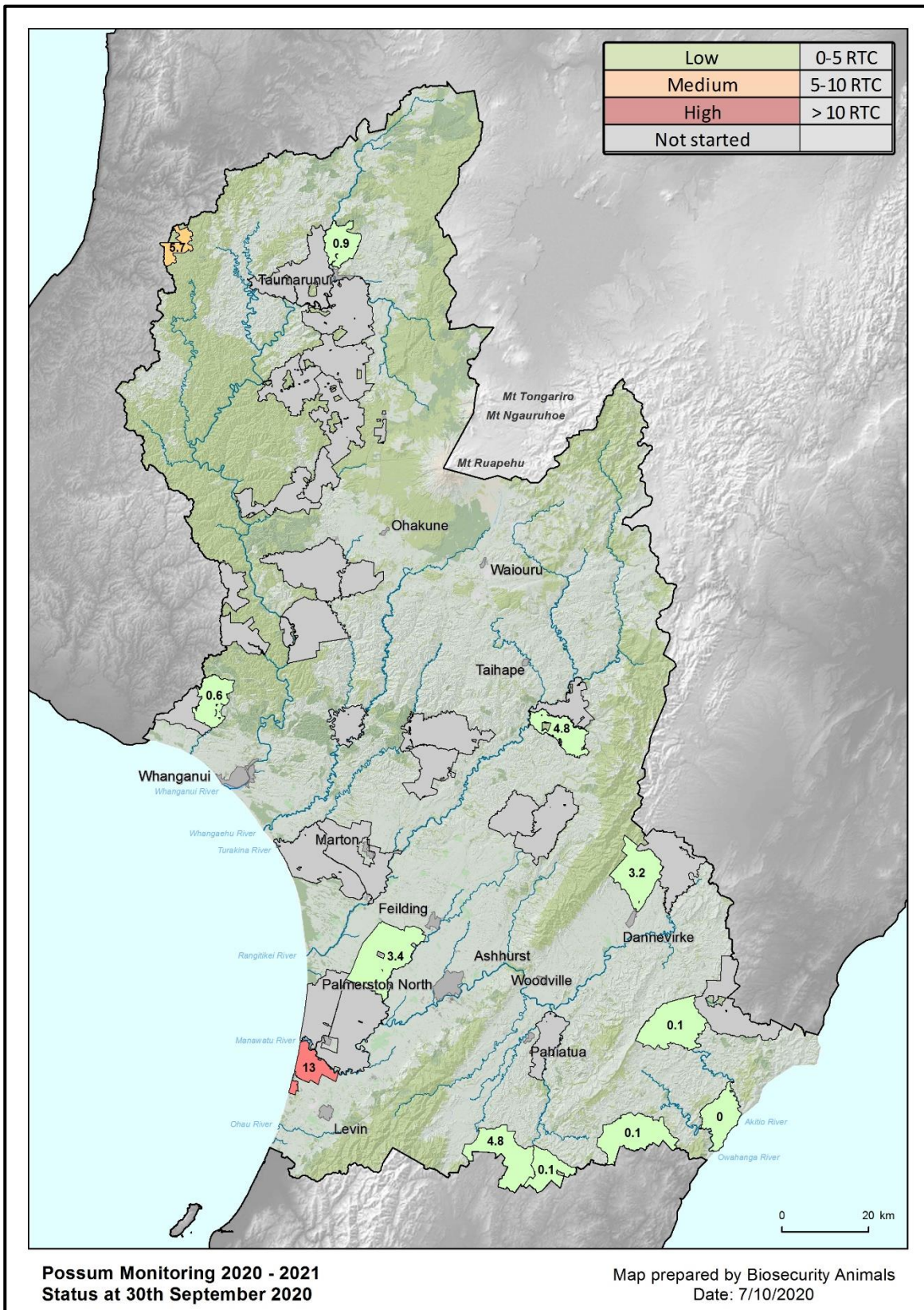
- 4.2.1 The first 12 of the programmed 38 PCO monitors were completed during the reporting period with the RTC results ranging from 0.0% to 13.0% RTC. The average result over the 12 monitors was 3.1%  $\pm$ 1.3%. Please refer to table 4 for the full list of PCOs monitored to date.
- 4.2.2 The Waiterere PCO returned a 13% RTC result and staff have investigated to determine factors that may have contributed to this higher-than-expected result. It has been concluded that the significant area of untreated possum habitat in the PCO has led to high populations in habitat adjacent to treated areas. Staff will contact the owners of the untreated land to encourage them to opt into the possum control programme.

Table 4 Monitors completed in this period

Possum Control Operation	RTC % $\pm$ 95%CI
Branscombe Coast	0 $\pm$ 0
East Alfredton	0.1 $\pm$ 0.1
Oporae East	0.1 $\pm$ 0.1
Waihoki	0.1 $\pm$ 0.1
Kai Iwi	0.6 $\pm$ 0.4
Taringamotu	0.9 $\pm$ 1.2
Matamau West	3.2 $\pm$ 1.5
Rongotea	3.4 $\pm$ 2.6
Eketahuna South	4.8 $\pm$ 3.2
Kawhatau	4.8 $\pm$ 1.2
Waitaanga	5.7 $\pm$ 1.8
Waitarere	13 $\pm$ 3.2
<b>Year to date average</b>	<b>3.1 <math>\pm</math>1.3</b>

4.2.3 We will be undertaking the procurement process to select the contractor(s) for the next three years of monitoring at the same time as the PCO control contractor's procurement is being undertaken. Again, the aim is to have the selection process completed by March-April 2021.





Map 3 Status of Possum Monitoring

## 5 ROOK CONTROL PROGRAMME

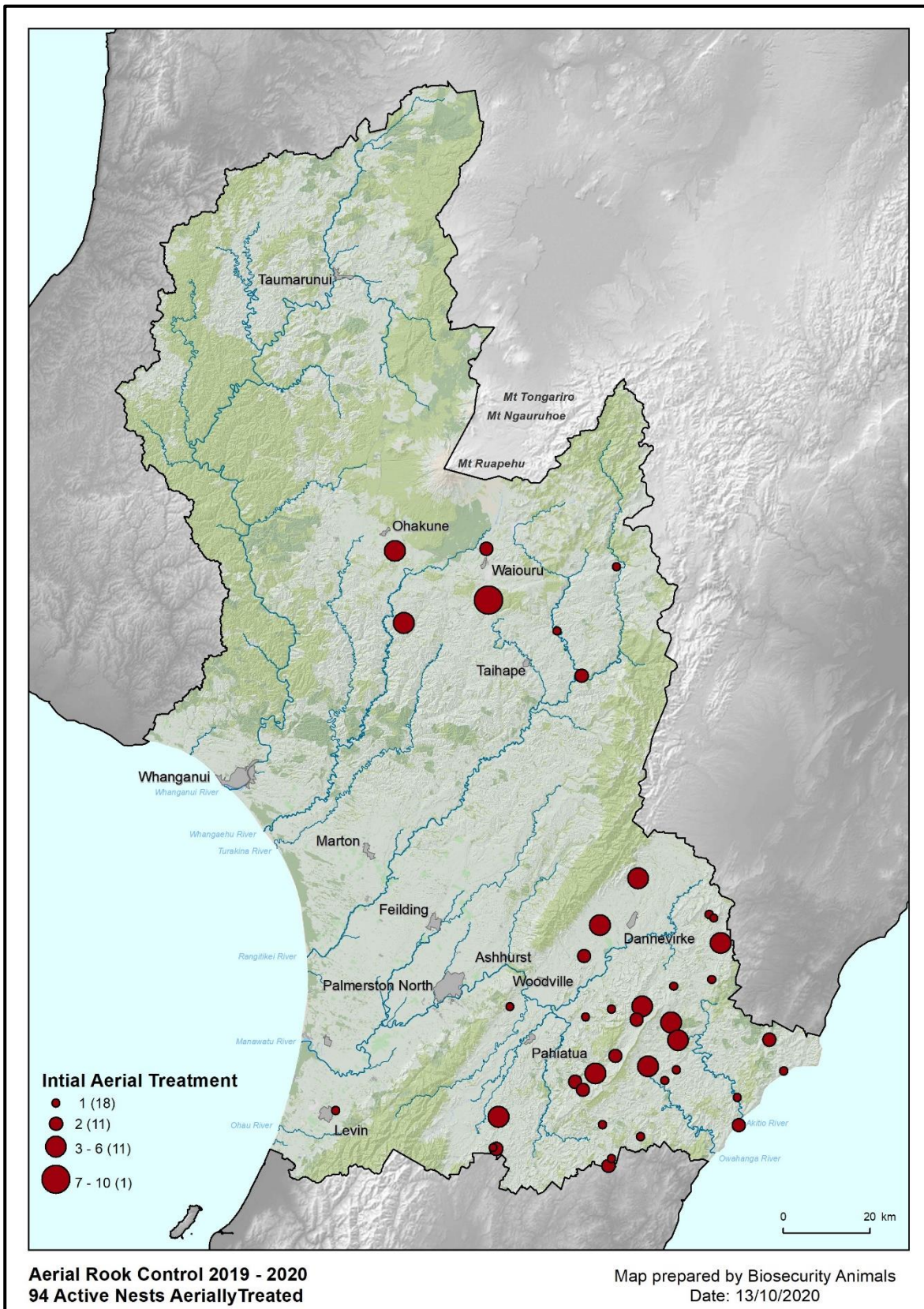
### 5.1 Programme overview

5.1.1 Rooks are an eradication species in Horizons' **Regional Pest Management Programme** (RPMP) 2017-37 and the region is surveyed annually for active rookeries. A contractor is engaged to aerially poison the nests to control both chicks and adult rooks.

### 5.2 Activity update

5.2.1 Surveillance for rookeries with nests was undertaken in September and further surveys will be completed in October, prior to the aerial control programme which will likely start in mid-October. Nests will be treated with a contact toxin by an operator slung from a helicopter. Last year 94 active nests spread over 56 active rookeries were treated (See map below).

5.2.2 As part of the Annual Plan process, additional budget has been provided for a limited second check of rookeries later in the season. This aligns with rooks' ability to sometimes breed following control of the initial nest.



Map 2 Previous years control work.

## 6 AMENITY PEST PROGRAMME

### 6.1 Programme overview

6.1.1 The amenity pest programme provides a pest animal advisory service for ratepayers with pest animal issues. Horizons provides advice and in some cases loans equipment (traps) and supplies bait to enable landowners to undertake their own control. Enquiries are responded to within two working days of being lodged and usually involve pests such as possums, rabbits, mustelids, rats, and magpies.

### 6.2 Activity update

6.2.1 The amenity pest programme received 319 enquiries during the reporting period. The greatest number of enquiries related to rabbits, followed by possums and mustelids (ferrets, stoats and weasels).

6.2.2 All enquiries were responded to within the agreed timeframes.

6.2.3 Horizons staff are assisting a group consisting of farmers, Pukaha Mt Bruce Wildlife Centre and Greater Wellington Regional Council with advice on rabbit control in the area surrounding the Wildlife Centre. The area has had issues with rabbits in the past and the group are investigating how, with a collaborative approach, they can achieve the most effective control. Horizons already provides a predator trapping service on this land.

## 7 REGIONAL PEST MANAGEMENT PLAN (RPMP)

### 7.1 Programme overview

#### WALLABIES

7.1.1 As part of the Operational Plan for 2019-20 a project was included to investigate monitoring for wallabies in the region, to enable early detection of this exclusion pest (as identified in Horizons Regional Pest Management Plan 2017-37). This has not advanced due to the Covid-19 lockdown; however, discussions with Landcare Research have taken place. They are currently undertaking research into detection strategies for wallabies and will be reporting back to stakeholders with advice. When this advice is available, staff will present to Council options for keeping this exclusion pest out of our region.

7.1.2 Just prior to the Covid-19 lockdown a report of a wallaby sighting on the Desert Road north of Waiouru was received from the public. Horizons is liaising with Defence Force managers to

carry out an investigation across the nearby Defence land. Council will receive a report of the findings once the investigation is complete.

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