



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 2017-2037.

2 ANNUAL PLAN TARGETS

A summary of the Annual Plan targets and progress to date is provided in Table 1. **Error! Reference source not found.** Table 1 Progress reporting for the Biosecurity Animals Annual Plan targets for 2019-20.

Performance measure/ contract target	Target	Progress
Possum densities are maintained at/below 10% residual trap catch (RTC) in all existing/new possum control operations. This is to enhance production, biodiversity, disease protection, and amenity values.	<10% RTC	On track, averaging 2.8% RTC to date this year in the areas monitored post control this financial year.
Additional ha included in [the Possum] Control Programme	57,441 ha	On track, with 10,460 ha completed; 16% of total new area planned this year.
All known rookeries are treated annually to reduce crop losses and damage.	1	On track, surveillance 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.	1	On track, with 328 enquiries during this period bringing the total to 597 for July to December. All enquiries dealt with within two working days.

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 70,000 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 OSPRI had initiated possum control 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 an area. The Horizons programme is delivered by a combination of council staff (approximately 65%), and external contractors (approximately 35%).
- 3.1.2 In 2019-20 the voluntary possum control programme spans a total area of 1,568,248 ha (approximately 70% of the 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 cease further pest control. Within the area of the programme in 2019-20:
- Landowners have opted out of 79,174 ha (5%) of the programme;
 - 66,718 ha (4.3% of the total area) not previously control by Horizons (ex-OSPRI) is being added to the programme Note: this includes 9,277 ha carried forward from last year;
 - 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 abundance indicated by the monitoring programme and the projected possum abundance derived from a population modelling app (PosSim) that assists programme management decision-making.
- 3.1.3 The possum control programme as a whole is made up of a total of 153 Possum Control Operations (PCOs). Within each year 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, 99 are being worked this year, with 54 being deferred due to low possum abundance. Of the 99 PCOs being worked, 64 are being completed by Horizons staff and 35 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, to provide more complete coverage of the region. If a significant number opt-in, the total number of PCOs completed over the year may reduce. A further change this year is enabling 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 the Horizons Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP) 2017-2037. This will provide some guidelines that will assist when assessing adjoining landowners with higher possum abundance than their neighbouring properties, and the level that will trigger a regulatory response. This advice is due to be received in April-May 2020.

3.2 Activity update

Possum Control

3.2.1 The 2019-20 programme is progressing well, with 34 of the 99 PCOs (34%) completed (Table 2 and Map 1).

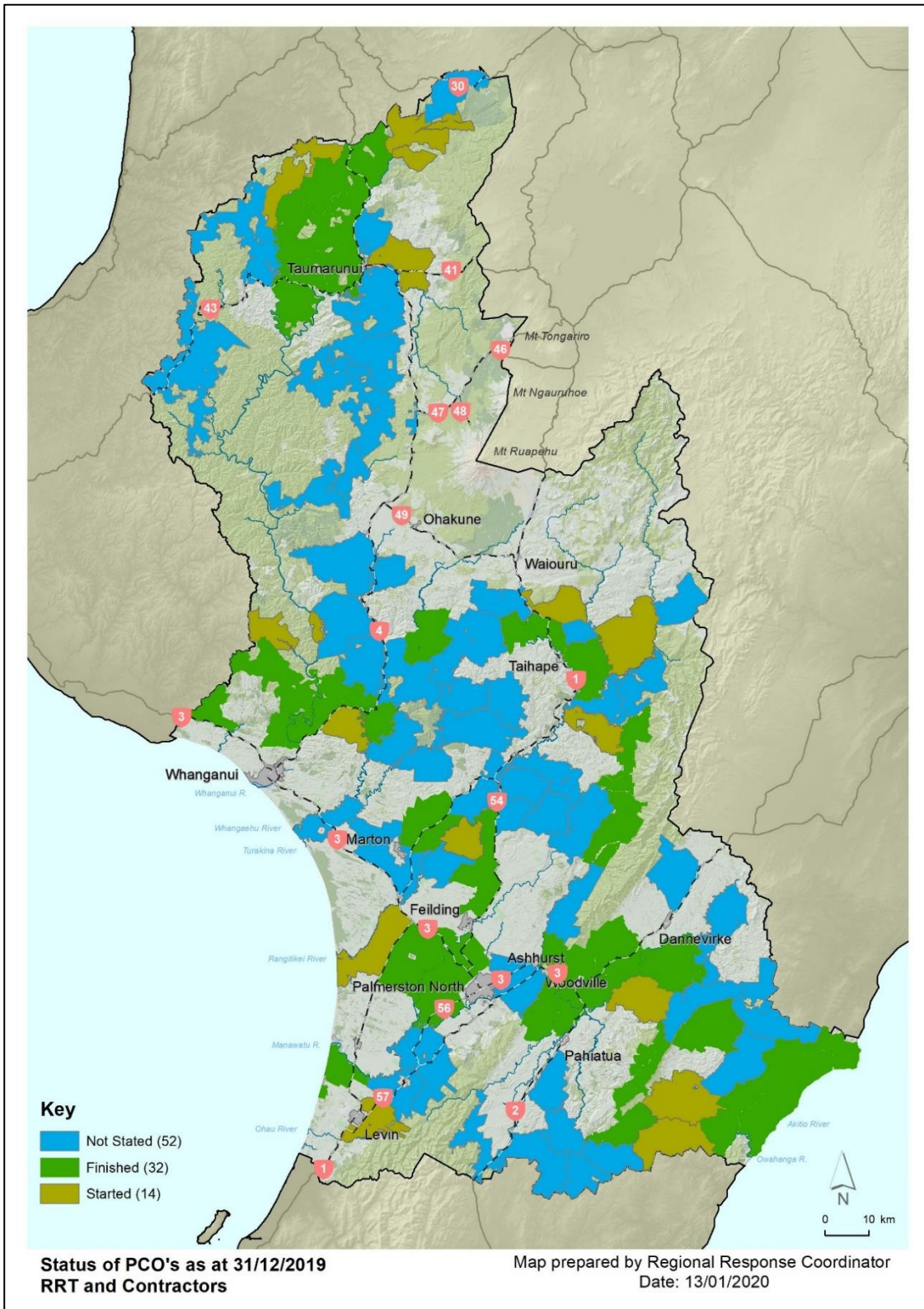
3.2.2 Overall, 32 (34%) of the PCOs to receive treatment have received treatment and a further 14 (14%) have been started as at 31 December. The numbers indicate 34% were complete at a point half-way through the year so the programme is on track. The external contractors align their contribution to the programme to start later and are contracted to complete by the end of May. This reflects the bulk of the effort being put in over spring/summer/autumn.

3.2.3 Horizons staff have met with Department of Conservation (DOC) staff to discuss further alignment of the two agencies' possum control programmes.

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

Measure	Reporting Period				Total	Target	% Complete	Status at 31/12/2020
	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4				
Regional Response Team								
PCOs completed	12	12			24	64	39	On track
New hectares completed	1,460	9,000			19,460	43,765*	44	On track
External Contractors								
PCOs completed	2	6			8	35	26	On track
New hectares completed	0	0			0	22,953	0	On track
Total PCO Programme								
PCOs completed	14	18			32	99	34	On track
New hectares completed	1,460	9,000			19,460	66,718*	30	On track

*Includes 9,277 ha of work carried over from last year.



Map 1: Status of current Possum Control Operations as delivered to 30 October 2019.

4 POSSUM MONITORING

4.1 Programme Overview

- 4.1.1 The possum monitoring programme aims to monitor all of the PCOs over a four-year period to provide an index of possum abundance. All of the new areas of control receive pre- and post-control monitoring to establish if they actually do require control and, if they are controlled, the post- result helps determine a measure of population reduction from the control. This measure of reduction helps refine a possum population model (PosSim) that is used to guide the selection of low possum population PCOs for deferral.
- 4.1.2 The monitoring programme operators put out 25 lines of 10 wax-tags (Photo 1) per PCO and the number of bite marks gives an index of the possum abundance. The monitoring lines are randomly selected to remove bias and provide a robust estimate. The monitoring is predominately done by an independent contractor who is not involved in any of the control work. Some of the internal team monitor the possum control work completed by external contractors.



Photo 1: Wax-tag monitoring device as set in the field. The green square is luminous to attract possum attention at night.

4.2 Activity Update

- 4.2.1 The monitoring programme is progressing well with 35 (61%) of the planned 56 monitors now completed. Originally 56 monitors were programmed to be undertaken in the 2019-20 year; however this was recently increased by one to facilitate a trial at Mokai to assess the effectiveness of the new Double Tap Pellet Bait. The total monitoring operations now include 40 PCOs for maintenance control, 12 pre- and post-control operations for new areas coming

into the programme, four operations that were carried over from last year and the Mokai PCO' where the bait trial is being carried out. The monitoring programme remains on track to meet delivery milestones for the year. Monitoring to date has returned an index of 2.8% RTC for the 35 areas monitored post-control.

5 ROOK CONTROL PROGRAMME

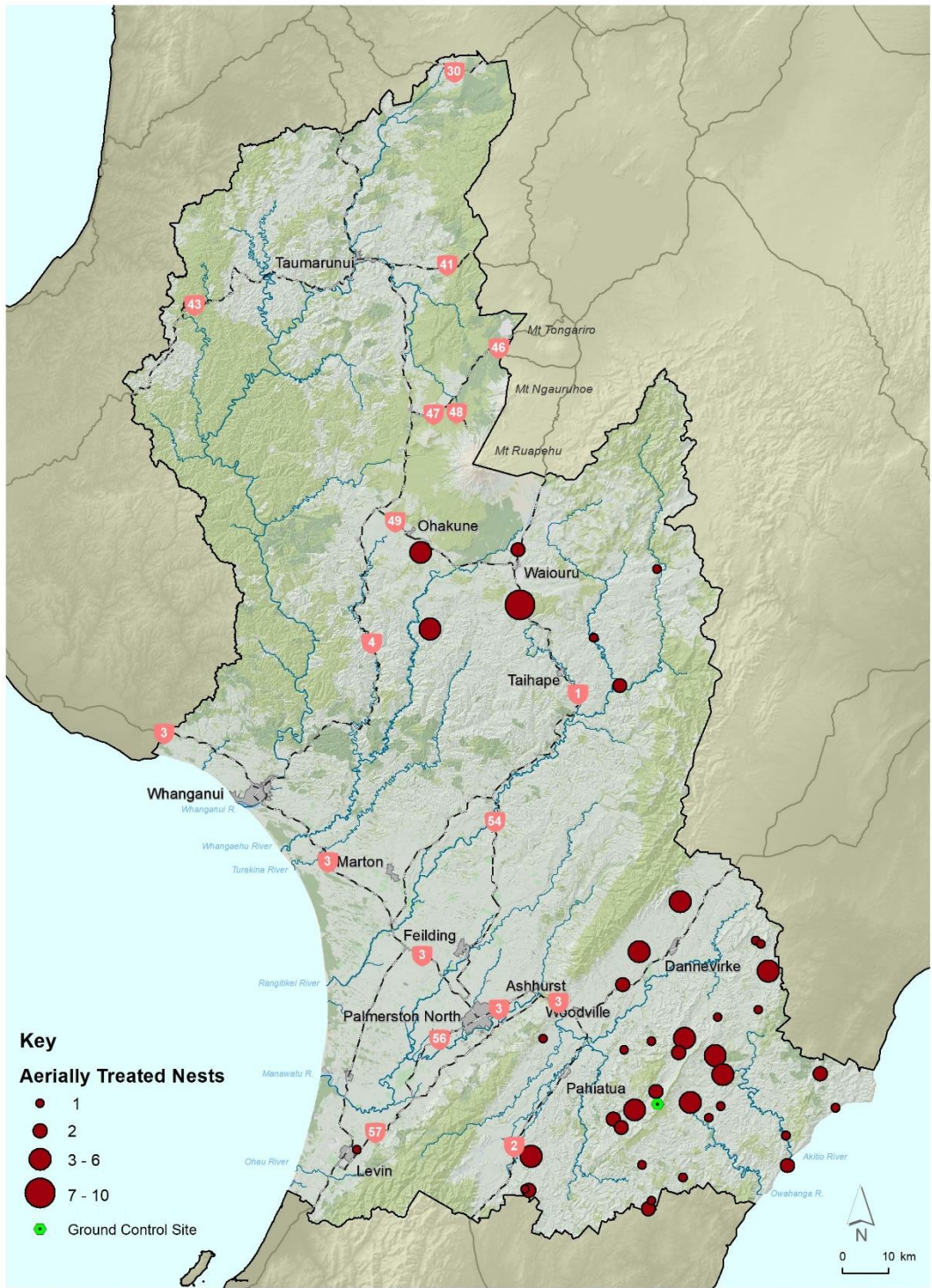
5.1 Programme overview

5.1.1 Rooks are an eradication species in the Horizons RPMP 2017-37 and the region is surveyed annually for active rookeries. A contractor is engaged to aeriaily poison the nests to control both chicks and adult rooks.

5.2 Activity update

5.2.1 Rookeries with nests were located in September and the aerial control programme was completed in October. Nests were treated with a contact toxin by an operator slung from a helicopter and there was a decrease of approximately 38% region-wide from the previous year with 94 active nests spread over 56 active rookeries.

5.2.2 In December the Woodville team responded to a call from a landowner with an estimated 150 rooks on a crop. The rooks were controlled by laying baits by hand and it is estimated that 130 individuals were killed.



Aerial Rook Control 2019 - 2020
94 Active Nests Aerially Treated

Map prepared by Regional Response Coordinator
 Date: 13/01/2020

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 who ask for assistance. Horizons provides advice and in some cases we loan equipment for limited control to be undertaken.

6.2 Activity update

6.2.1 The amenity pest programme received 328 enquiries from the public during on how to deal with a wide range of pest issues. The total number of enquiries for 2019-20 now stands at 597. These enquiries are responded to within two working days of them being lodged and usually involve pests such as possums, rabbits, mustelids, rats, magpies and ants. Most enquiries are responded to with advice on controlling the pest and sometimes traps and devices are loaned for the control of the problem creatures.

7 REGIONAL PEST MANAGEMENT PLAN (RPMP)

7.1 Programme overview

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 to 2037).

7.1.2 Wallabies (Photo 2) are not present in the region, unless by permission of Horizons and then are subject to strict conditions. In neighbouring regions they are considered significant pests. During the year the team will be investigating how Horizons can effectively, proactively survey for incursions, and develop response plans should an incursion occur. The results of this work will be reported to Council.

Photo 2: Dama wallaby, an exclusion pest in Horizons Regional Pest Management Plan.



7.2 Review of Brodifacoum

7.2.1 During November 2019 the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) initiated a review of the use of brodifacoum as a vertebrate toxic agent, and invited industry stakeholders to respond with their views on the use of this chemical for the control of pests for which it is registered. Horizons currently uses brodifacoum bait in the PCO programme and can use up to 35 tonnes of bait annually. Approximately 400 grams of bait is used at each possum bait station for the control of possums and rats. The suggested changes to the use of brodifacoum by MPI would add significant costs to the PCO programme if implemented. The initial estimate is that the additional measures could double the cost to deliver the current PCO programme, from \$4m to \$8m a year. Horizons' approach to safely using brodifacoum is outlined in the submission. The submission from Horizons is attached for your information. Staff will be awaiting MPI's response in 2020 and will keep Council informed of progress.

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