



# BIOSECURITY ANIMALS

## 1 ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

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

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

1.1.2 The Biosecurity Animals activity links with a range of national and regional policies and strategies. Biosecurity Act 1993, National Policy Direction 2015 and Regional Pest Management Plan 2017-2037.

## 2 ANNUAL PLAN TARGETS

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

2.1.2 Table 1 below.

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 2.4% RTC to date this year.
Additional ha included in [the Possum] control programme	57,441 ha	On track. 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. 269 enquiries have been dealt with in this period (July to September). All

## 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 some areas Horizons has taken on new areas where OSPRI have initiated possum control for the control and eradication of bovine TB. Horizons has and continues to absorbing 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 (approx. 65%), and external contractors (approx. 35%).
- 3.1.2 In 2019-20 the voluntary possum control programme currently spans a total area of 1,568,248 ha (approximately 70% of the region). The total possum control area continues to grow annually as Horizons takes over possum control where OSPRI achieves freedom from Bovine TB in areas they have previously controlled and these cease further pest control in these areas. Within the area of the programme in 2019-20:
- Landowners have opted out of 79,174 ha (5%) of the programme;
  - 66,718 ha of area not previously control by Horizons (ex- OSPRI) is being added to the programme (4.3% of the total area). Note this includes 9,277 ha carried forward from last year;
  - 865,655 ha is scheduled for maintenance control i.e. has previously had control by Horizons and will receive control (bait station fills) this year (55.2% of the total area);
  - 556,701 ha (35.5%) of the programme area is being deferred from control due to low possum abundance as informed by the monitoring programme and associated PosSim model that informs programme management.
- 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 around areas for control and over a four year period each of the PCOs are monitored at least once. The growing area of the programme also increases the monitoring programme ensure each PCO is monitored at least once every four years. This year out of a possible 153 PCOs, 99 are being worked, 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.

- 3.1.4 The team are being enabled to take a more thorough approach this year including further consolidating bait station infrastructure, analysing each of the PCOs as they are treated to assess if further bait stations are required. The team are also seeking landowners who have previously “opted-out” of the voluntary programme to “opt-in” to provide a more complete coverage of the region. If a significant number of “opt-ins” are received 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 the bait stations where areas of high possum abundance are encountered in areas of the PCOs receiving treatment.
- 3.1.5 Landcare Research have 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 RPMP 2017-2037. This will provide some guidelines that will be able to be used when assessing adjoining landowners with higher possum abundance to their neighbour, and the level which will trigger a regulatory response. This advice is due to be received in April 2020.

## 3.2 Activity update

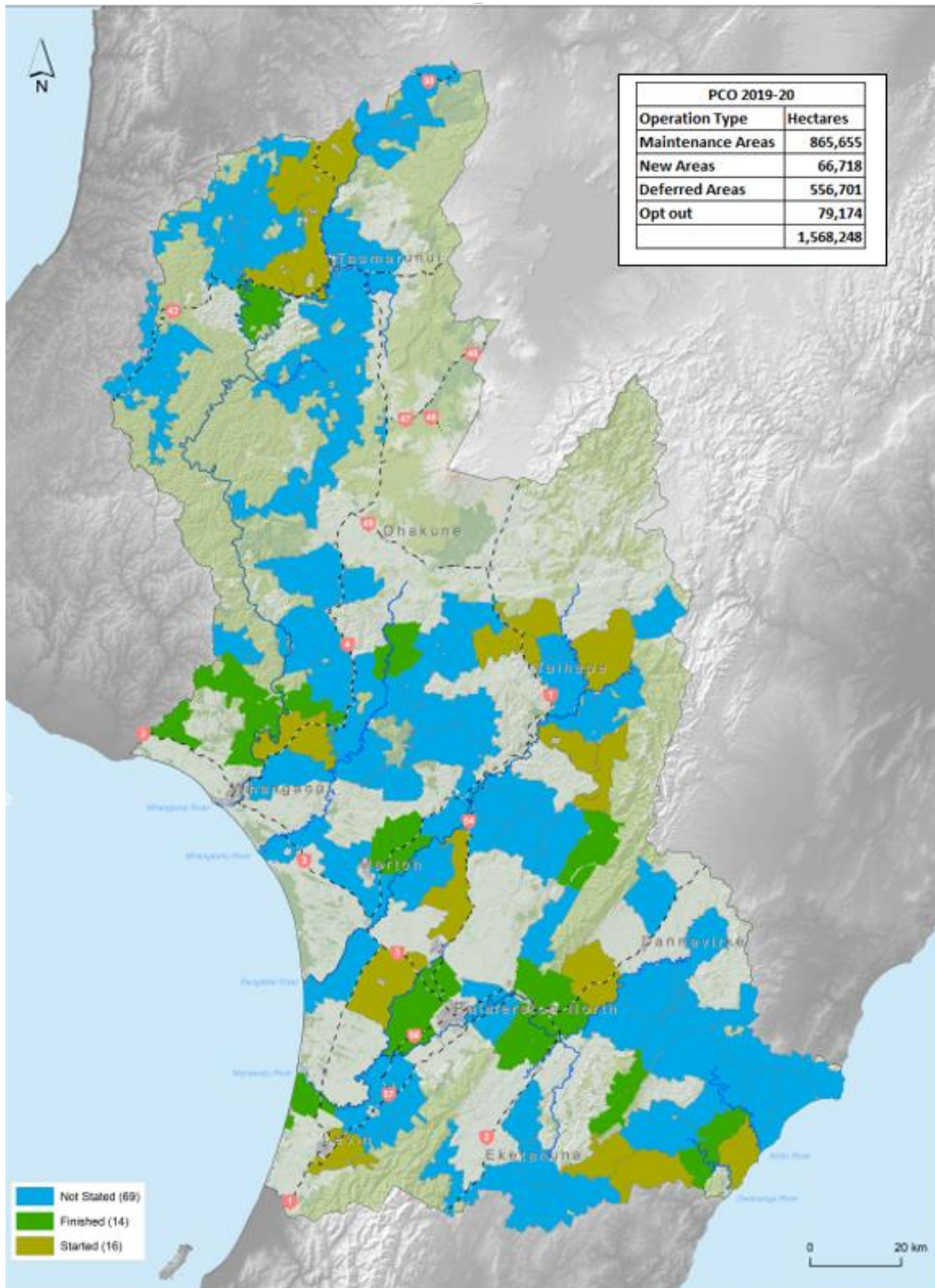
### Possum Control

- 3.2.1 A good start to this year’s programme has seen 14 of the 99 PCOs (14%) completed (Table 2, Map 1). With lambing concluded in most areas, access to all of the planned PCOs has significantly increased and this will enable a number of the PCO’s that have been started to be completed. Improving weather and ground conditions should assist this programme move along as expected toward achieving its milestones. Horizons staff have met with the Department of Conservation 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	Progress to Date	This Period	Target	% Completed
<b>Regional Response Team</b>				
PCOs completed	12	12	64	19%
New Hectares completed	10,460	10,460	43,765*	24%
<b>External Contractors</b>				
PCOs completed	2	2	35	6%
New Hectares completed	0	0	22,953	0%
<b>Total PCO Programme</b>				
PCOs completed	14	14	99	14%
New Hectares completed	10,460	10,460	66,718*	16%

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



**STATUS OF ALL PCOs AS AT 30/09/2019  
RRT AND CONTRACTORS**

Regional Response Coordinator  
Ref: 32421 Date: 31/10/2019  
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Map 1: Status of current Possum Control Operations as delivered to 30 October 2019.



## Possum Monitoring

- 3.2.2 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 PCO's for deferral.
- 3.2.3 The monitoring programme puts out 25 lines of 10 waxtags (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 estimation. The monitoring is predominately done by an independent contractor who is not involved in any of the control work. Some of the internal team do complete monitoring of the possum control work completed by external contractors.



Photo 1: Waxtag monitoring device as set in the field, the green square is luminous to attract possum attention at night.

- 3.2.4 The monitoring of possum control for effectiveness is well underway with 16 of 56 PCOs (29%) completed. The total monitoring operations includes 40 PCOs for maintenance control, 12 pre and post operations for new areas coming into the programme, and 4 operations that were carried over from last year. Lambing and docking have slowed progress. The monitoring programme remains on track to meet delivery milestones for the year. Currently the monitoring to date has returned an index of 2.4% RTC.

- 3.2.5 The new areas which are no longer going to receive OSPRI control are pre-control monitored to estimate possum abundance, if the index is below 2% RTC we defer control due to low population numbers. If they are deferred they will be treated in the following year. If they are above the 2% threshold new bait stations are deployed where required, and baiting will occur. If there is possum abundance above 15% we will bait twice in the year. Post operational monitoring is also undertaken and this provides a measure of population reduction which we use to help refine our possum population modelling tool, PosSim.

## 4 ROOK CONTROL PROGRAMME

### 4.1 Programme overview

- 4.1.1 Rooks are an eradication species in the Horizons RPMP 2017-37 and every year we survey the region for active rookeries and then engage a contractor to aurally poison the nests which will control both chicks and adult rooks.

### 4.2 Activity update

- 4.2.1 The rook control programme has started for the year with staff undertaking surveillance of birds to establish rookery locations that can be treated during the nesting season. This surveillance information is used to create a treatment plan for control of rooks during October/November. Once rookeries have been located the nests are treated with a contact toxin, generally by an operator slung from a helicopter. An update of the results of the rook control programme will be provided at the next Environment Committee in February 2020 following the nest control programme.

## 5 AMENITY PEST PROGRAMME

### 5.1 Programme overview

- 5.1.1 The amenity pest programme provides a pest animal advisory service for ratepayers who have pest animal issues and ask for assistance. Horizons provides advice and in some cases we loan equipment for limited control to be undertaken.

### 5.2 Activity update

- 5.2.1 The amenity pest programme is well engaged with enquiries from the public (269) on how to deal with a wide suite of pest issues. 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 etc. most enquiries are responded to with advice on controlling the pest and sometimes traps and devices are loaned for the control of the problem animal or bird.

## 6 REGIONAL PEST MANAGEMENT PLAN (RPMP)

### 6.1 Programme overview

6.1.1 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).

6.1.2 Wallabies (Photo 2) are not present in the region, unless by permission of Horizons and subject to strict conditions. Wallabies are in neighboring regions and are considered a significant pest. Over 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.

### 6.2 Activity update

6.2.1 A wallaby sighting was reported to Horizons in early September, 10 km north of Taumarunui. An urgent surveillance operation was undertaken with thermal night vision survey of the site and surrounding area, followed with a survey using a dog trained to locate wallaby. No sign of a wallaby was found. Local landowners were informed and asked to keep an eye out for any wallabies or sign of their presence, and report to Council if any sightings or sign are encountered. Another search in February/March is programmed as a follow up.



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

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