



Pest Animal Operational Plan 2025 – 2026 and Monitoring Report 2024-25

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Front Cover Photo
Rook nest in a gum tree (Taihape), A Cowley

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1 INTRODUCTION

This Operational Plan outlines the nature and scope of activities Horizons intends to undertake for pest animal management and the implementation of Horizons Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP) for the 2025-26 financial year.

It also includes a report on the previous year's 2024-25 activities and results in section six.

2 MANAGEMENT

The management and implementation of pest animal control programmes are managed by the Pest Animal Team Leader (Daniel Hurley), Senior Biosecurity Officers and the Regional Response Team.

The Possum Control Operations (PCO) work is carried out by the Regional Response Team (RRT) and five external contractors. Possum trend monitors are completed using a separate external contractor using the wax-tag method for monitoring possum populations.

The RRT has 15 field operators based out of offices in Taumarunui, Taihape, Whanganui, Marton, Kairanga, Woodville and Levin.

Other work includes the rook eradication programme, assisting several biodiversity programmes across the region, the pest monitoring and surveillance programme, and providing advice and support to ratepayers via the amenity pest programme.

3 REPORTING

Table 1: Biosecurity Pest Animals Reporting Requirements.

Report	Comment
Integrated Catchment Operations Committee Report quarterly.	Integrated Catchment Operations Committee reports will be prepared to report progress towards meeting annual plan targets.
Pest Animal Operational and Monitoring Plan	A review of the Operational Plan will be initiated in July of each year, and an updated Plan created for the new financial year.
Amenity Pest Database	The Frontline database will be kept current at all times, recording and reporting all animal pest enquiries.
Financial	Monthly performance against monthly phased budget will be reported to Council's Audit and Risk Committee as required.

4 FINANCIAL AND ACTIVITY OVERVIEW 2025 – 2026

4.1 Pest Animal Projects and Financial Summary

The projects and financial expenditure relating to the pest animal activity in the 2025-26 year are summarised into five project groups as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of the 2025-26 Annual Plan.

Projects	Revenue 2024-25	Revenue 2025-26	Difference
Possum Control Operations	\$3,816,965	\$4,177,163	\$360,198
Rook Control and Management	\$186,683	\$194,375	\$7,692
Statutory Pest Programmes (Amenity)	\$194,533	\$202,739	\$8,206
Monitoring	\$439,623	\$461,903	\$22,280
Pest Plan review project		\$52,200	\$52,200
Total Annual Plan Budget	\$4,637,804	\$5,088,379	\$450,576

4.2 Possum Control Operations

The Possum Control Operations (PCO) Budget has been combined in the table above and the Long-term Plan budget below has the PCO budget broken into two sections - PCO external contractors and an RRT (internal) PCO.

Planned Maintenance of Existing Network

This year's maintenance programme involves work in 88 operational areas with an estimated 113,118 bait stations to be visited and refilled. The total area of the 88 maintenance PCO being worked this year is 945,341 hectares.

All existing maintenance operations (PCOs) that have been included are because they were deferred from control in the previous year, or they were at the higher end of the PosSim model. All maintenance PCOs exceeding 6.5% RTC will be worked this year.

Table 3: Summary of the PCO costs 2025-26.

Annual Plan expenditure 2025 - 2026	110111 External	110112 Internal
Revenue	\$1,916,944	\$2,260,218
Depreciation	\$0.00	\$86,392
Operating Expenses	\$1,643,887	\$415,647
Personnel Expenses	\$259,038	\$1,619,799
Interdepartmental Expenses	\$14,020	\$138,380
Total Expenditure	\$1,916,945	\$2,260,218

Planned Initial PCOs

At the beginning of the 2025-26 year the PCO program is comprised of 153 operational areas totalling 1,568,200 hectares. With additional funding this year we plan to establish four PCOs for inclusion into the PCO program. These are the ex-OSPRI operational areas of: Aohanga, Karioi, Levin East and Tangiwai, totalling approximately 24,171 hectares and an estimate of 5,230 new bait station setups.

4.2.1 External (Contractor) PCO

Table 4: Summary of the external possum control and management costs 2025-26.

Accounts	Working LTP 25/26
Revenue	\$1,916,944
Environmental Expenditure	\$7,665
External Contractors & Service	\$1,635,200
Travel & Conferences	\$1,022
Operating Expenses	\$1,643,887
Personnel Expenses	\$259,038
Expenditure	\$1,902,925
Interdepartmental Transfers	\$14,020
Surplus / (Deficit)	\$0

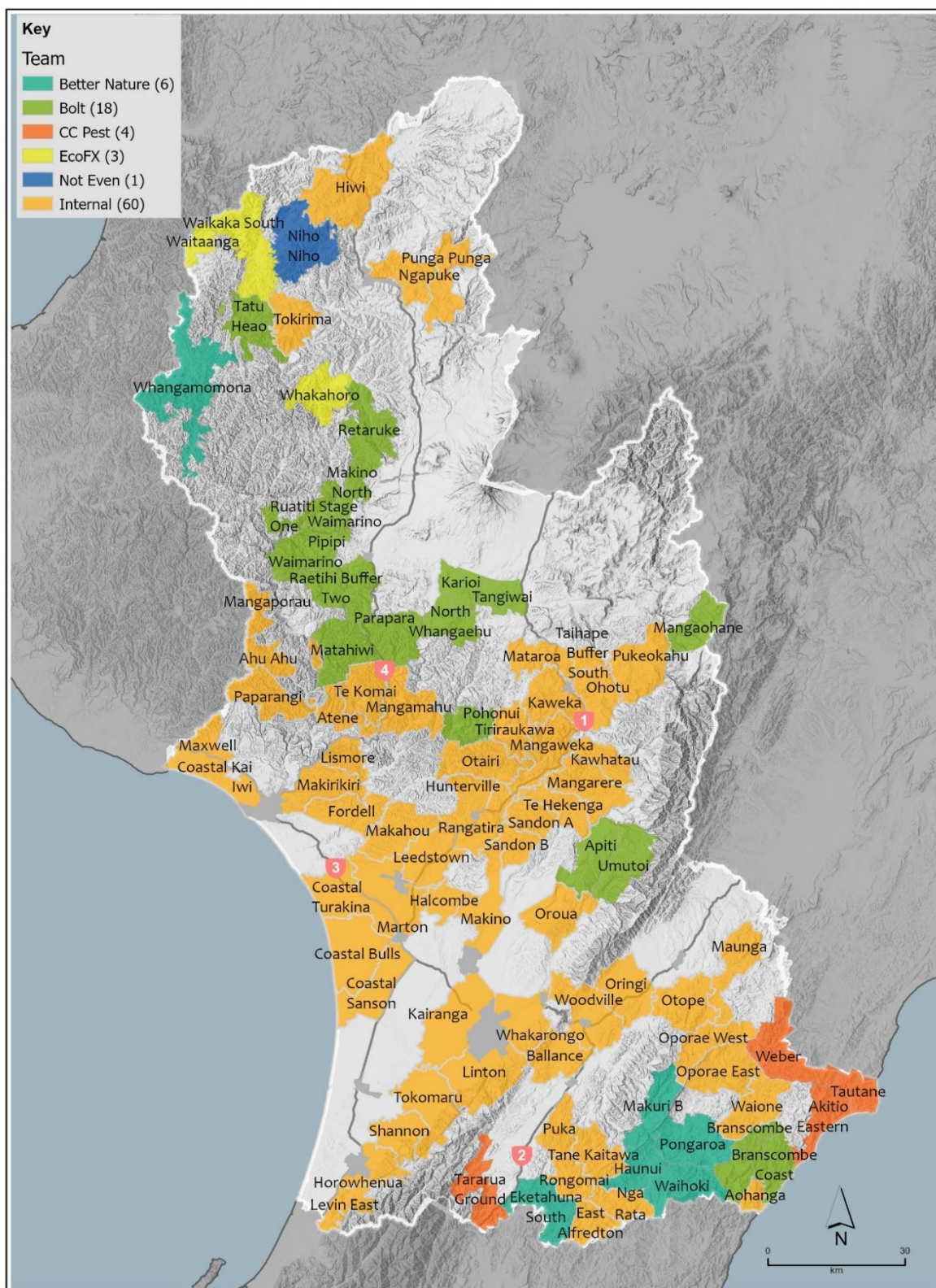
The external contractors are scheduled to undertake bait station work in 32 PCO for the 2025-2026 year. Approximately 45,287 bait station services will be undertaken over an area of 337,305 hectares. Map 1 and Table 6 provide a summary of the PCOs that will worked this year by Team.

4.2.2 Regional Response Team PCO

Table 5: Summary of the internal possum control and management costs 2025-26.

Accounts	Working LTP 25/26
Revenue	\$2,260,218
Environmental Expenditure	\$362,810
External Contractors & Service	\$37,507
Repairs & Maintenance	\$15,330
Operating Expenses	\$415,647
Depreciation	\$86,392
Personnel Expenses	\$1,619,799
Expenditure	\$2,121,838
Interdepartmental Transfers	\$138,380
Surplus / (Deficit)	\$0

The Regional Response Team plans to undertake work in 60 PCOs, visiting and refilling approximately 73,061 bait stations. The total area to be worked by the RRT is 632,208 hectares. Map 1 and Table 6 provide a summary of the PCOs that will be worked this year by Team.



Possum Control Operations July 2025 - June 2026

Prepared by: Biosecurity Pest Animal Team on: 2/07/2025

Map 1: Planned Possum Control Operations.

Table 6: Operational areas by Team 2025-2026.

Contractor/Team	PCO Name	Hectares	Bait Stations
Better Nature	Eketahuna South	11971	737
	Haunui	7927	878
	Makuri B	8716	1494
	Pongaroa	14132	1388
	Waihoki	11901	1111
	Whangamomona	26953	2311
Bolt Contracting	Apiti	11932	1562
	Branscombe	11229	1403
	Branscombe Coast	8016	811
	Karioi	7470	1900
	Makino North	5095	1426
	Mangaohane	7612	1007
	Matahiwi	13228	2116
	North Whangaeahu	8098	1081
	Parapara	12401	1166
	Pohonui	7440	656
	Raetihi Buffer Two	15638	3937
	Retaruke	14082	1872
	Ruatiti Stage One	8883	1440
	Tangiwai	6396	1550
	Tatu Heao	9683	1228
	Umutoi	12121	1235
	Waimarino	12557	891
	Waimarino Pipipi	900	412
CC Pest Control	Akitio Eastern	9673	933
	Tararua Ground	7371	916
	Tautane	5902	414
	Weber	14475	822
Rentokil	Waikaka South	15743	1944
	Waitaanga	3232	589
	Whakahoro	10085	2586
Not Even	Niho Niho	16444	3471
RRT Central	Coastal Bulls	16961	1170
	Coastal Sanson	12555	556
	Halcombe	6091	548
	Horowhenua	7474	754
	Kairanga	18453	1168
	Leedstown	12209	1423
	Levin East	7171	1150
	Linton	18427	1874
	Makino	12775	1049
	Marton	14931	1021
	Oroua	13146	2310
	Shannon	8261	1161
	Tokomaru	15519	1267
	Whakarongo	10627	1296
RRT Taihape	Hunternville	8542	1271

Contractor/Team	PCO Name	Hectares	Bait Stations
	Kaweka	11374	1474
	Kawhatau	7194	1555
	Mangarere	13337	1529
	Mangaweka	12387	1957
	Mataroa	8898	753
	Ohotu	10034	1136
	Pukeokahu	15741	1708
	Sandon B	5794	918
	Taihape Buffer South	3116	368
	Te Hekenga	8600	1063
	Tiriraukawa	7893	586
RRT Taumarunui	Hiwi	23788	3525
	Ngapuke	10252	2271
	Punga Punga	8924	2681
	Tokirima	9156	1106
RRT Whanganui	Ahu Ahu	7398	878
	Atene	5974	456
	Coastal Kai Iwi	9763	1275
	Coastal Turakina	14792	1040
	Fordell	11513	1669
	Lismore	6345	959
	Makahou	12892	1670
	Makirikiri	11238	1723
	Mangamahu	13087	1812
	Mangaporau	4256	555
	Maxwell	5364	941
	Otairi	13360	1500
	Paparangi	10182	1418
	Rangatira	8766	963
	Sandon A	6737	828
	Te Komai	10296	804
RRT Woodville	Aohanga	3134	630
	Ballance	10335	1417
	East Alfredton	6348	661
	Maunga	11754	997
	Nga Rata	7107	458
	Oporae East	13261	1226
	Oporae West	10297	732
	Oringi	13051	1445
	Otope	13198	1297
	Puka	7645	802
	Rongomai	6804	610
	Tane Kaitawa	10279	1396
	Waione	12129	560
	Woodville	15274	1691
Total		969,512	118,348

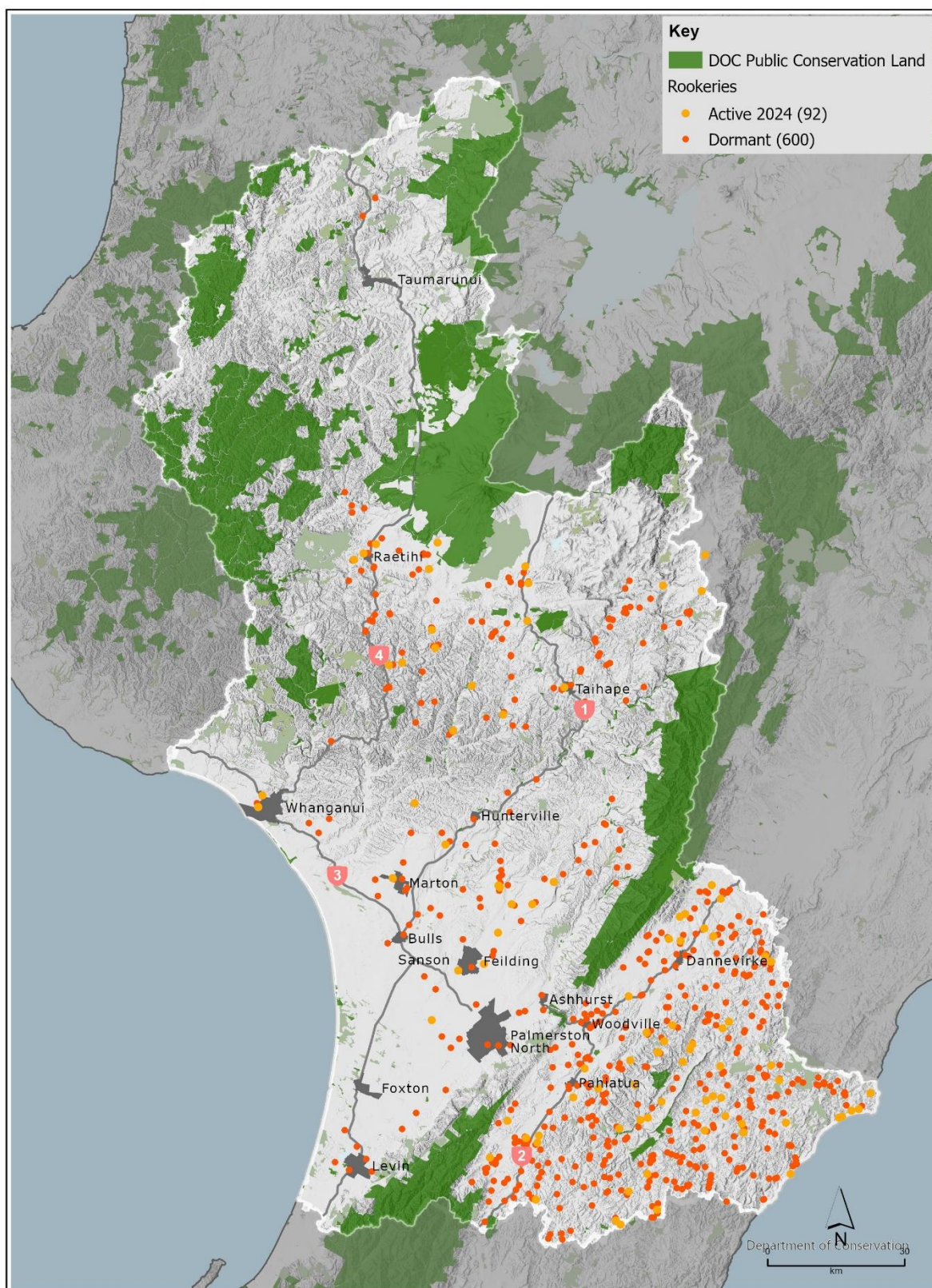
4.3 Rook Control and Management

Rooks are categorised as an eradication species in the RPMP, and the region is surveyed annually for active rookeries.

The main control method will be aerial baiting of rook nests during the breeding season (October-November) targeting both chicks and adult birds. An experienced helicopter company will be contracted to undertake the aerial work. All active rookeries will be treated in October and revisited 3-5 weeks following the first visit to pick up any nests missed in the first time around and target birds that have laid a second round of eggs. Ground poisoning operations will also be carried out should the opportunity arise.

Table 7: Summary of the rook control and management costs 2025-26.

Accounts	Working LTP 25/26
Revenue	\$194,375
Advertising & Promotions	\$3,066
External Contractors & Service	\$98,828
Repairs & Maintenance	\$562
Operating Expenses	\$102,456
Personnel Expenses	\$88,212
Expenditure	\$190,668
Interdepartmental Transfers	\$3,707
Surplus / (Deficit)	\$0



Known Active Rookeries for Treatment 2025

Prepared by: Biosecurity Pest Animal Team on: 15/10/2025

Map 2: Planned rookery survey 2025-26.

4.4 Amenity Pests

The amenity pest programme provides a pest animal advisory service for ratepayers with pest animal issues across the region. Horizons provides advice and in some cases loans 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 and magpies.

To avoid oversubscription to the amenity programme, changes were made to the programme relating to the supply of rabbit bait with bait only supplied to new customers on a limited basis, and this policy will continue. If landowners require more bait, they are advised to purchase from local stock and station agents.

Table 8: Summary of the amenity pests' costs 2025-26.

Accounts	Working LTP 25/26
Revenue	\$202,739
Environmental Expenditure	\$8,687
Operating Expenses	\$8,687
Personnel Expenses	\$166,637
Expenditure	\$175,324
Interdepartmental Transfers	\$27,414
Surplus / (Deficit)	\$0

4.5 Monitoring

This year's monitoring will focus on trend monitoring of 37 maintenance Possum Control Operations using the wax-tag method, by an external contractor. Undertake rabbit counts over historical routes by the Regional Response Team.

Table 9: Summary of the monitoring costs 2025-26.

Accounts	Working LTP 25/26
Revenue	\$461,903
Environmental Expenditure	\$10,220
External Contractors & Service	\$255,500
Operating Expenses	\$265,720
Personnel Expenses	\$191,838
Expenditure	\$457,558
Interdepartmental Transfers	\$4,345
Surplus / (Deficit)	\$0

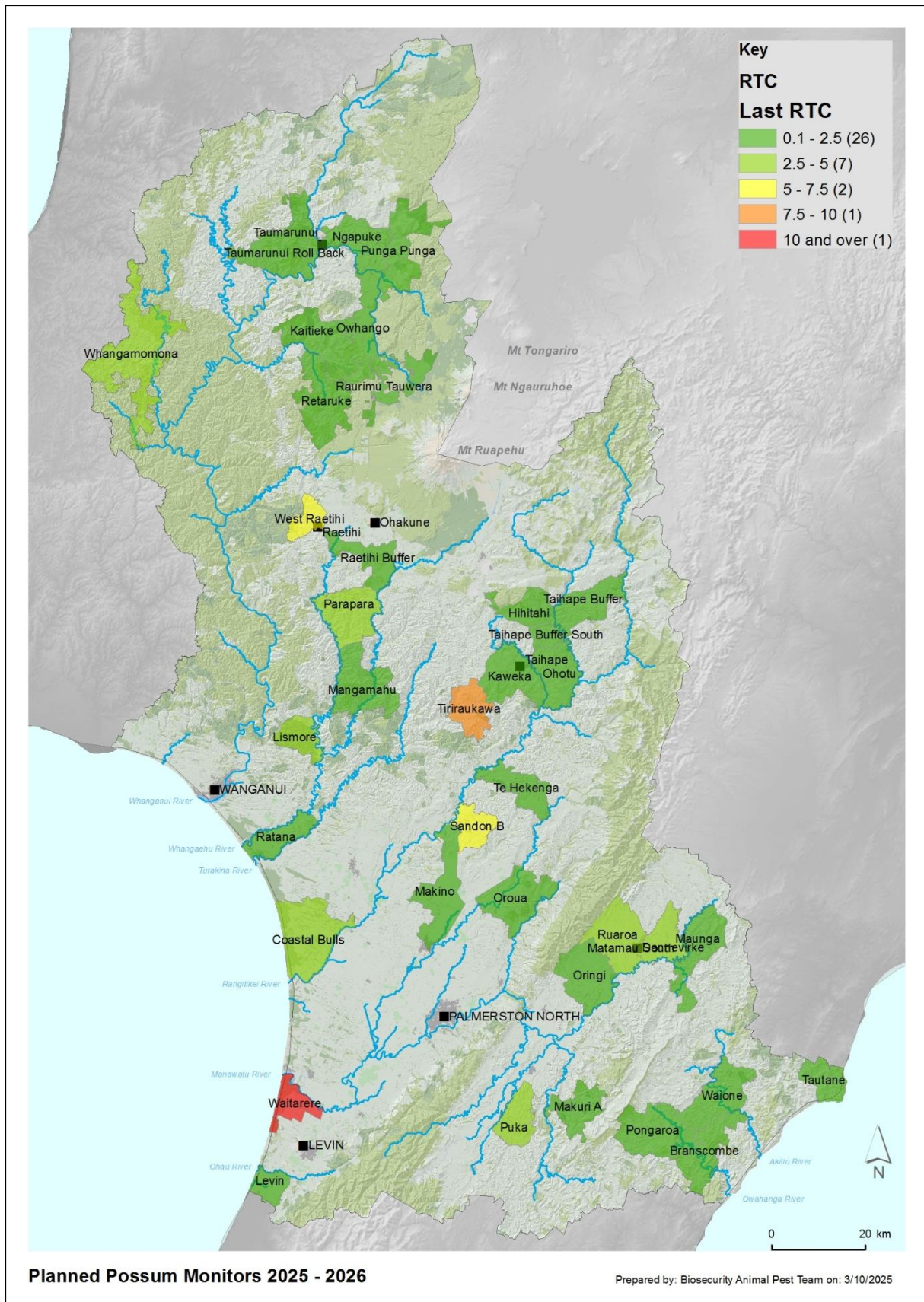
4.5.1 Possum monitoring

Horizons will design, manage and complete 37 possum wax-tag monitors in the 2025-26 financial year. Holden Contracting Ltd is in the second year of the Possum Monitoring 2024-2027 contract and will undertake most of the work. Darrin Spillane Ltd is the back-up supplier and will subcontract to Holden Contracting from time to time if required, particularly for the PCOs in the Ruapehu District. Map 3 and TTable 10 provide a summary of PCO to be monitored and previous results.

Table 10: PCOs monitored

Monitors (37)	Number of Lines	2021-22 RTC Results %	2025 -26 Results
Branscombe	25	0.1	-
Coastal Bulls	25	3.7	-
Hihitahi	25	0.1	0.1
Kaitieke	20	0.1	-
Kaweka	25	0.9	-
Levin	15	0.1	0.1
Lismore	25	3.4	-
Makino	25	1.8	-
Makuri A	25	2	0.6
Mangamahu	25	0.1	-
Matamau South	25	3.2	1.8
Maunga	25	0.1	-
Ngapuke	25	0.1	-
Ohotu	25	1.2	-
Oringi	25	0.1	-
Oroua	25	2.3	
Owhango	25	1.5	-
Parapara	25	2.9	-
Pongaroa	25	0.1	-
Puka	25	4.6	-
Punga Punga	25	0.4	-
Raetihi Buffer	25	0.4	-
Ratana	25	0.1	0.1
Raurimu Taurewa	25	1.5	-
Retaruke	25	2.3	-
Ruaroa	25	4	0.1
Sandon B	25	5.4	-
Taihape Buffer	25	0.1	0.1
Taihape Buffer South	25	0	-
Taumarunui Roll Back	25	0.1	-
Tautane	25	0.1	-

Monitors (37)	Number of Lines	2021-22 RTC Results %	2025 -26 Results
Te Hekenga	25	1.2	-
Tiriraukawa	25	8.2	-
Waione	25	0	-
Waitarere	25	13	1.8
West Raetihi	25	6.8	-
Whangamomona	25	4.3	-
Total/Average	910	2.1	0.6

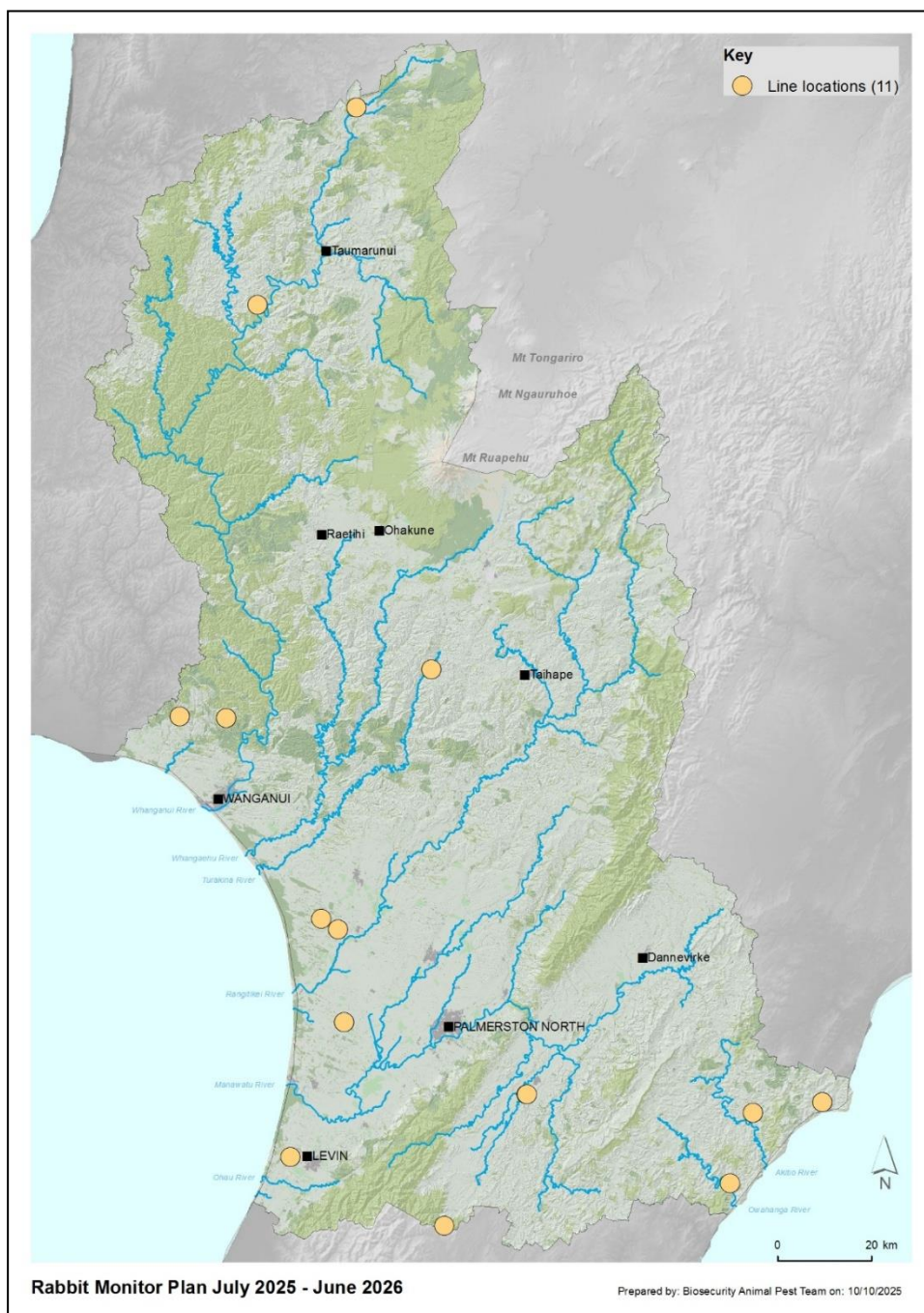


Map 3: Possum – Planned wax-tag monitoring showing previous results.

4.5.2 Rabbit monitoring

Rabbit night count lines are completed by the Regional Response Team. The work involves the counting of rabbits on predetermined count routes across the region. The counts are undertaken in late May to early June. The count routes traverse a variety of topography, soil types and farming practices. The results of the night counts will be presented as an average number of rabbits observed per kilometre for each individual route.

The results are compared to previous years to determine changes in the rabbit populations across the region.



Map 4: Rabbit planned counts 2025-26.

4.6 Wallaby surveillance

The RPMP has wallabies listed in the “exclusion programme” as they have the potential to cause adverse effects to both productive capacity and environmental values in the region. While wallabies are present in New Zealand, currently there are no known populations established in the region. During the coming year, Horizons Biosecurity personnel will investigate any reported wallaby sightings by inspecting likely habitat in and around the location of the sighting and may also involve using a contractor with an accredited wallaby detection dog. The results of inspections will be reported to MPI. Should any of the inspections subsequently confirm the presence of wallabies, Horizons will work closely with MPI to determine the extent of the population and initiate control work.

5 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Table 11: 2025-26 Annual Plan targets.

Performance Measure / Contract Target	Target
Possum densities are maintained at/below 10% RTC in all existing and new possum control operations. This is to enhance production, biodiversity, disease protection and amenity values.	<10% RTC
Monitor possum control densities within the Horizons possum control programme based on the PCOs that make up the overall possum control area.	>20% of PCOs monitored
All additional hectares released from OSPRI control are included in the PCO programme.	4 PCOs = 24,156 hectares
All known rookeries are treated annually to reduce crop losses and damage.	100%
Provide an urban/peri-urban animal pest management service to assist ratepayers with specialist advice and equipment. All enquiries responded to within 2 working days.	100%

6 BIODIVERSITY PEST ANIMAL CONTROL

The Regional Response Team supports the Biodiversity work programme by carrying out pest animal control, and result monitoring; hours are summarised in (Table 12Table 12) for the trapping programme.

There are currently over 2,000 bait stations protecting priority habitat sites with additional bait stations are added to the PCO program as new sites are managed.

Table 12: Estimated hours required for pest control at Biodiversity sites.

Site	Target species	Hours
Tōtara Reserve	Possum, mustelids, rats	915
Te Āpiti Buffer	Possum, mustelids, rats, cats	400
Pukaha Buffer	Mustelids, cats, possums	384
Manawatū Estuary	Mustelids, hedgehogs and rats	96
Christie's Lake	Mustelids & Possums	60
Broadlands	Mustelids	60
Blake's Bush	Possums, rats, hedgehogs	43
McErlean's Snail Gully	Possums, rats, hedgehogs	43
Perawitis Wetland	Possums, rats, hedgehogs	43

7 BIOSECURITY ANIMALS MONITORING REPORT 2024 - 2025

7.1 Overview

The biosecurity animals programme achieved all four Annual Plan targets. No new hectares required control following release from OSPRI in 2024-25 (Table 13).

Table 13: Reporting for the Biosecurity Animals Annual Plan targets as of end of year June 2025.

Performance measure/ contract target	Target	YTD Result
Possum densities are maintained at/below 10% RTC in all existing and new possum control operations. This is to enhance production, biodiversity, disease protection, and amenity values.	<10% RTC	Achieved. The results across the 36 monitors (Map 1) completed this year range from 0.1% to 9.6% RTC, average 1.9% RTC (+/- 0.9%).
Monitor possum control densities within the Horizons possum control programme based on the PCOs that make up the overall possum control area.	>20% of PCOs monitored	Achieved. 23.5% (36 of 153) PCO monitored (Map 1, Figure 10).
All additional hectares released from OSPRI control are included in the PCO programme.	N/A	Not applicable. There was no new OSPRI hectares in the 2024-25 year.
All known rookeries are treated annually to reduce crop losses and damage.	100%	Achieved. 100% of all 43 known rookeries treated.
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%	Achieved. 593 enquiries have been received during the 2024-25 year, and all were followed up within the agreed timeframes.

7.2 Possum Control Operations

Overall, the possum control programme finished close to completion with 97% of planned PCOs finished and achieved 104% of the target bait station filled for the financial year to end of June 2025 (Table in Map 5). The Possum Control programme planned to control possums over 88 operational areas with an estimated 113,375 bait stations to be visited and refilled. The total area of the 88 PCOs planned to be worked in 2024-25 was 877,800 hectares (about 45% of the region, Map 5).

Thirty-six PCO monitors were completed during the financial year, with the results ranging from 0.1% to 9.6% RTC. The average was 1.9% RTC and all monitors were under the target of 10% (Map 6)

7.3 Rabbits

No rabbit counts or Haemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV) survey was conducted in 2024-25.

7.4 Rooks

Rook control was completed through October and November. Overall, there were more active nests (up from 72 to 167), but with a continuation of the decline in the number of active rookeries (now at 43, from 55 last year).

Staff have responded to enquires as needed with two successful ground operations carried out during the months of November and December. In the Tararua District at a Herbertville property an estimated 119 rooks were killed and in the Manawātū District at a Makino property an estimated 60 were killed.

7.5 Wallabies

This year we have followed up on two reported sightings from the public that came via the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) National Wallaby Programme. They were:

- 23rd August 2024 – Wallaby roadkill was reported on SH4 approx. halfway between Whanganui and Raetihi, location was very vague, and the reporter was not able to stop. Questionnaire was completed with one of the occupants of the vehicle. Whanganui animal pest team travelled the road, a follow up trip of the road was also completed later by another team, no wallabies found. Both reported finding young goats on the side of the highway that had been hit by vehicles.
- 24th August 2024 – a householder in Whanganui reported sighting wallaby scat on her property with photo evidence. Didn't look like wallaby, photo was forwarded to a EBOP wallaby specialist and was confirmed to not be wallaby scat.

7.6 Amenity Pests

The amenity pest programme responded to 593 enquiries for the year. The highest number of calls received were about possum (233) followed by rabbits (99) and mustelids (61). All landowners making enquiries were contacted within the prescribed timeframes and provided with advice and, in some cases equipment such as traps and small amounts of toxins to help them deal with their particular pest issues. Distributions of enquiries across the region for the year-to-date are shown in (Map 8).

7.7 Biodiversity Support Animal Pest Control

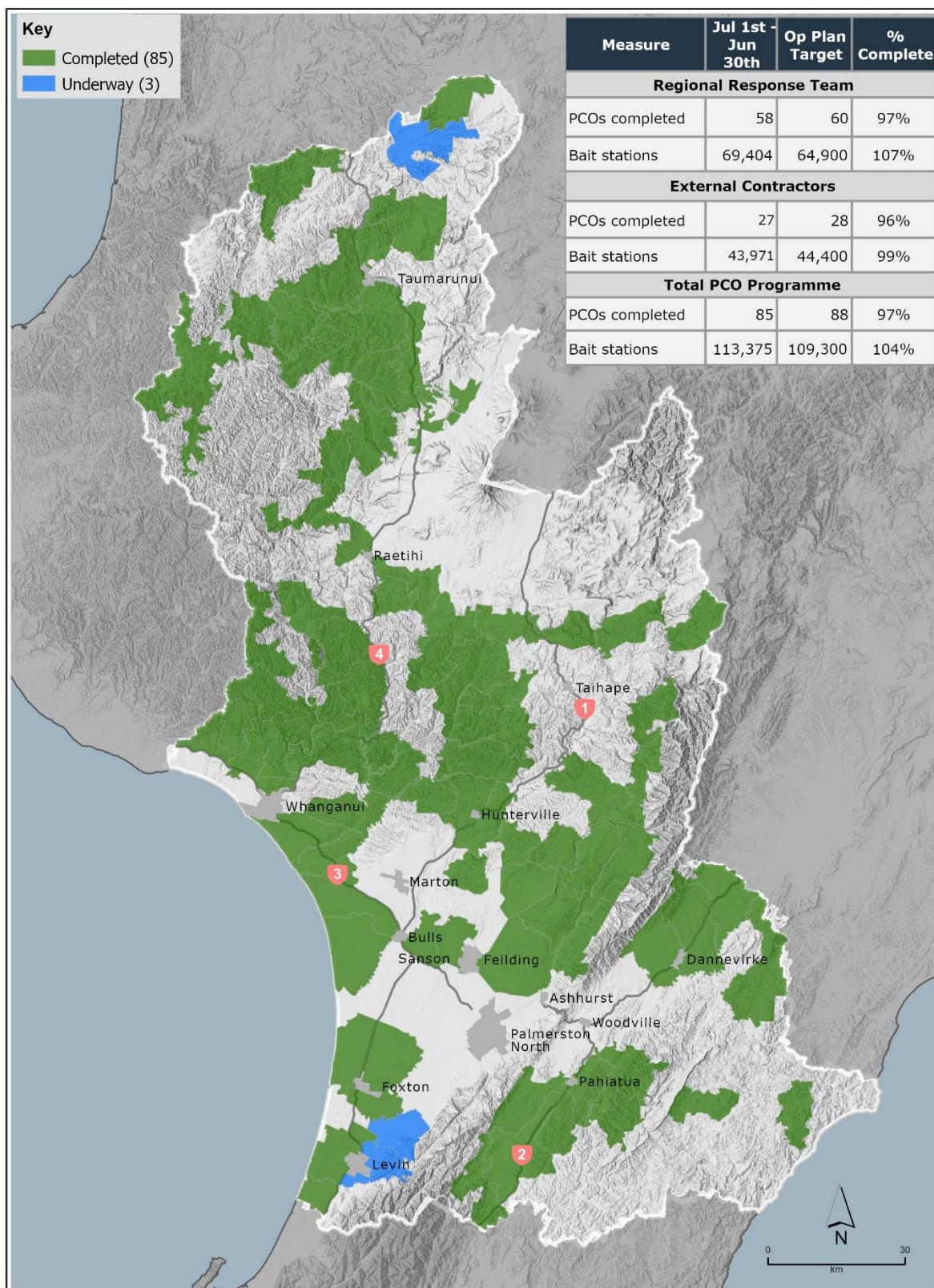
Horizons staff have carried out 5,937 trap checks at selected priority habitat and icon sites over the period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025. The catches are shown in Table 14.

Rat control continues to suppress numbers with the rat monitor for autumn returning a result of 6% Tracking Tunnel Index. Another round of control was carried out in June while rat numbers and food abundance were both low.

Table 14: Trapping results at various biodiversity sites in 2024-25.

Operation	Trap Numbers	Cat	Ferret	Hedgehog	Possum	Rat	Stoat	Weasel	Total
Blake's Bush	5	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	5
Broadlands	16	2	3	26	2	26	2	0	61
Christie's Lake	39	0	1	12	0	14	2	0	29
Manawatū Estuary	41	0	0	18	0	14	11	4	47
McErlean	8	1	1	2	0	7	2	1	14
Perawitis Wetland	7	0	0	8	0	9	0	1	18
Pukaha Buffer	186	32	17	94	1	198	25	37	404
Te Āpiti Buffer South	181	0	0	49	0	54	0	26	129
Tōtara Reserve	207	2	3	36	13	97	8	18	177
FW Horowhenua Wetland	25	2	1	22	0	44	12	1	82
Total	715	39	26	267	16	464	66	88	966

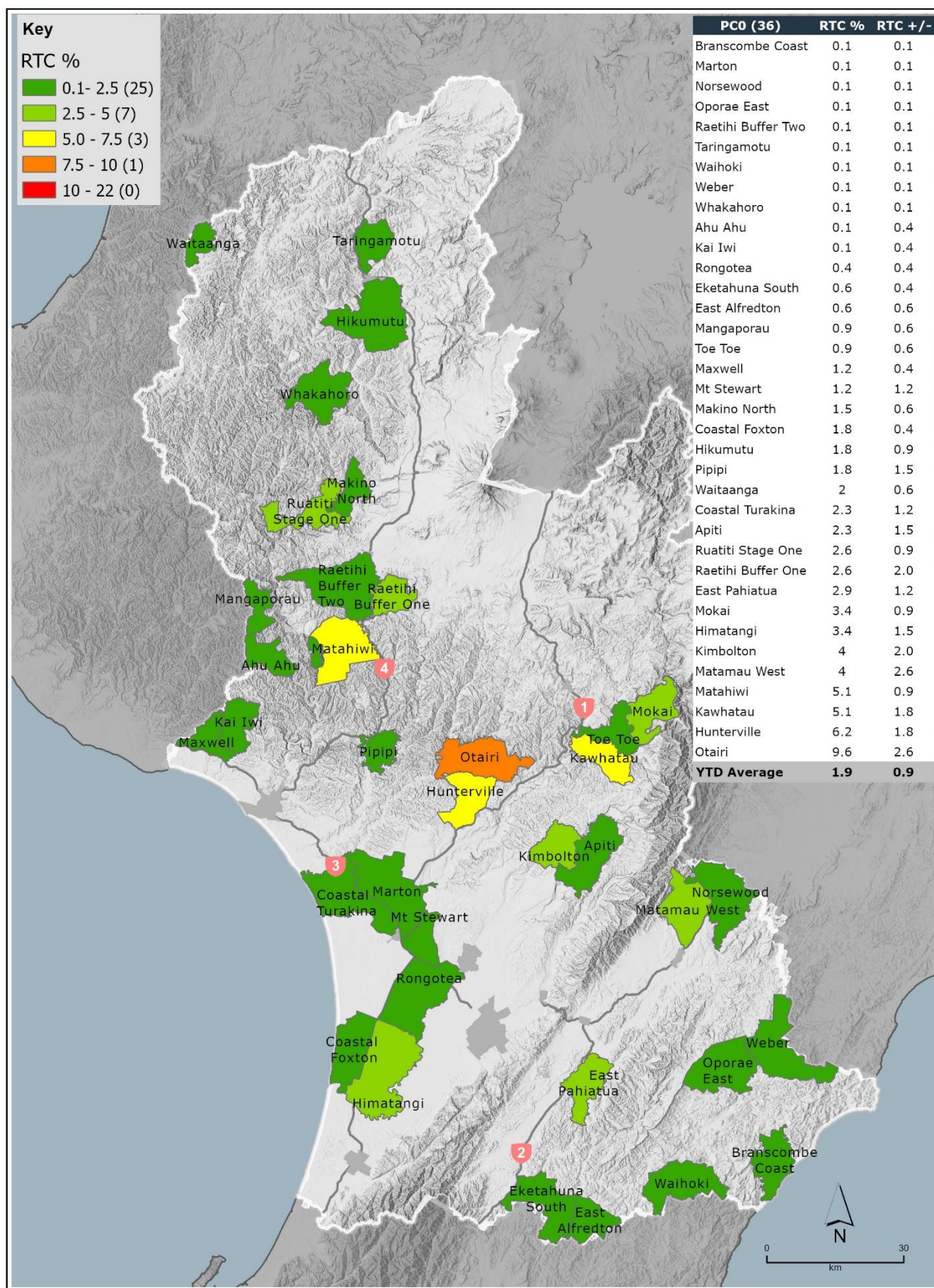
7.8 End of Year Maps



Possum Control Operations July 2024 - June 2025

Prepared by: Biosecurity Pest Animal Team on: 1/07/2025

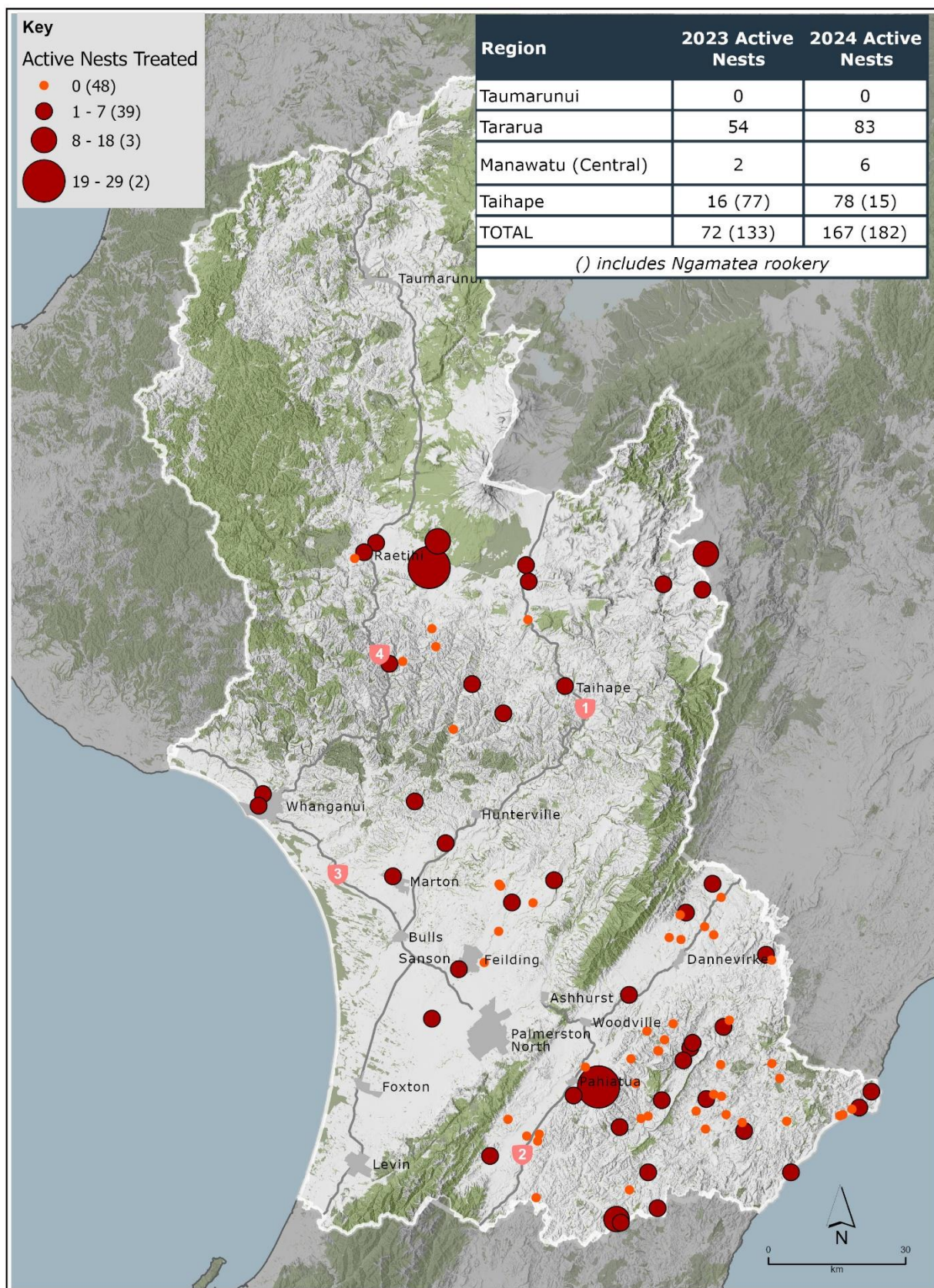
Map 5: Possum Control Operation Status at year end (2024-25).



PCO Monitor Results July 1st - June 30th

Prepared by: Biosecurity Pest Animal Team on: 2/07/2025

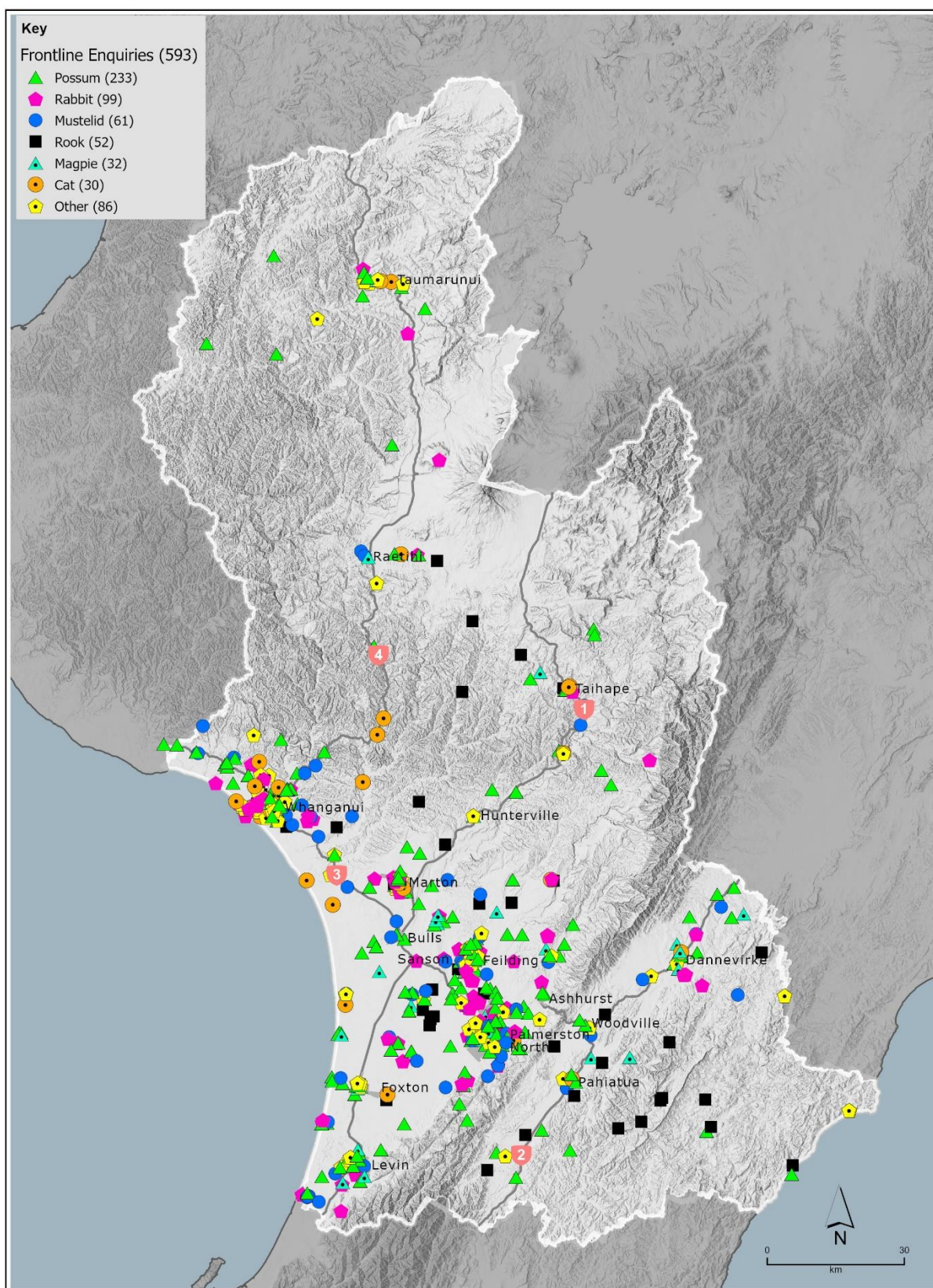
Map 6: Possum Control Operation monitor results 2024-25.



Aerial Rook Control 2024

Prepared by: Biosecurity Pest Animal Team on: 9/01/2025

Map 7: Aerial Rook Control 2024.



Amenity Pest Enquiries July 1st to June 30th

Prepared by: Biosecurity Pest Animal Team on: 3/07/2025

Map 8: Amenity pest enquiries 2024-25.



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