

Bush Gully and Tarndale – Molesworth bovine TB control operation



Removing TB from wildlife

Our proposed plan

OSPRI is planning an aerial possum control operation on Molesworth Station in 2023, from May, as part of a wider plan to eradicate TB from Molesworth cattle by 2026. North Canterbury and Marlborough have an extensive history of bovine TB infection in both livestock and wildlife.

This operation repeats an aerial flown in the winter of 2021. To control the spread of bovine TB, possum numbers need to be kept extremely low (around one to two animals every 10 hectares) for at least five years. Aerial control over a large area and short timeframe is the key to effectively reducing possum numbers.

The TBfree programme aims to manage and eventually eradicate bovine tuberculosis (TB) from New Zealand's farmed cattle and deer and wild animal populations. Controlling disease prevents livestock production losses and protects the world leading reputation of New Zealand's dairy, beef and deer products. We use possum control, along with regular herd testing and movement restrictions, to achieve our eradication goals.

What to expect from the operation

Use of bait

The operation will begin with the distribution of non-toxic, green cereal pellets by helicopter. This "pre-feed"

gives possums a taste for the pellets and overcomes bait shyness. One to two weeks later, toxic, green cereal pellets will be applied by helicopter at a rate of one kilogram per hectare. Six-gram pellets will be used rather than the standard 12g to facilitate more rapid breakdown of bait. Each pellet contains a small proportion (0.15 percent) of 1080.

Following a successful 'low-sow' trial (reducing the application rate to one kilogram per hectare) OSPRI will repeat this application across the entire treatment area within this proposed operation. That's about 4-6 baits dispersed over an area the size of a tennis court. Research has shown that the movement ranges of possums in high country terrain are larger than the ranges of forest dwelling possums.

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When dogs come into contact with 1080 through ingesting baits or scavenging poisoned carcasses, the outcome is usually fatal. Most reported dog deaths occur after eating poisoned carcasses, not bait.

What happens now?

This operation is planned to take place from May 2023. Total area for this operation will be up to 87,000ha.

A contractor, Vector Free Marlborough, will be delivering these operations on behalf of OSPRI's TBfree Programme. Before each operation, affected landowners and occupiers will be visited by the contractor. They will discuss boundary concerns, water supply safety and the management of any risks to dogs and livestock. Statutory permissions from the Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Health are required for the operation. Affected landowners and occupiers as well as interested parties will be contacted again before each operation starts. Notices will be published in local newspapers and warning signs will be placed at all likely access points to the operational area.



Mitigating impact on deer

Wild deer are not the target of this operation, and where consent conditions allow, we intend to use a repellent within the cereal bait – to reduce the risk of unintended by-kill, and impact to the deer population. This same repellent was previously trialled, in aerial operations in the Clarence and Molesworth, and proved to be a highly successful mitigation option.

What hunters can do

Once the toxic bait has been applied, do not take game animals from the area (including the buffer zone) until the caution period has ended. This is determined by the speed of breakdown of the bait and possum carcasses. Hunters will need to refer to the NZ Food Safety authority (NZFSA) requirements for hunting wild and game estate animals, and be aware of the pesticide status of the area they are hunting in. Do not bring dogs into the treatment area until after the caution period has ended. Dogs are particularly susceptible to poisoning by 1080.

So, despite the reduced application (and lower density) of bait, possums that forage further are more likely to encounter and consume a lethal dose.

This Molesworth aerial operations will be subject to strict safety, quality assurance and monitoring requirements.

Advanced GPS navigational equipment will be used to ensure the pellets are accurately placed and exclusion zones avoided.

Biodiversity benefits

The operation will have additional conservation benefits for native birds and bush. Possums eat the forest canopy and prey on native birdlife, including eggs and chicks. Biodegradable 1080 is also extremely effective at controlling other introduced predators such as ship rats and stoats.



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TBfree is an OSPRI programme



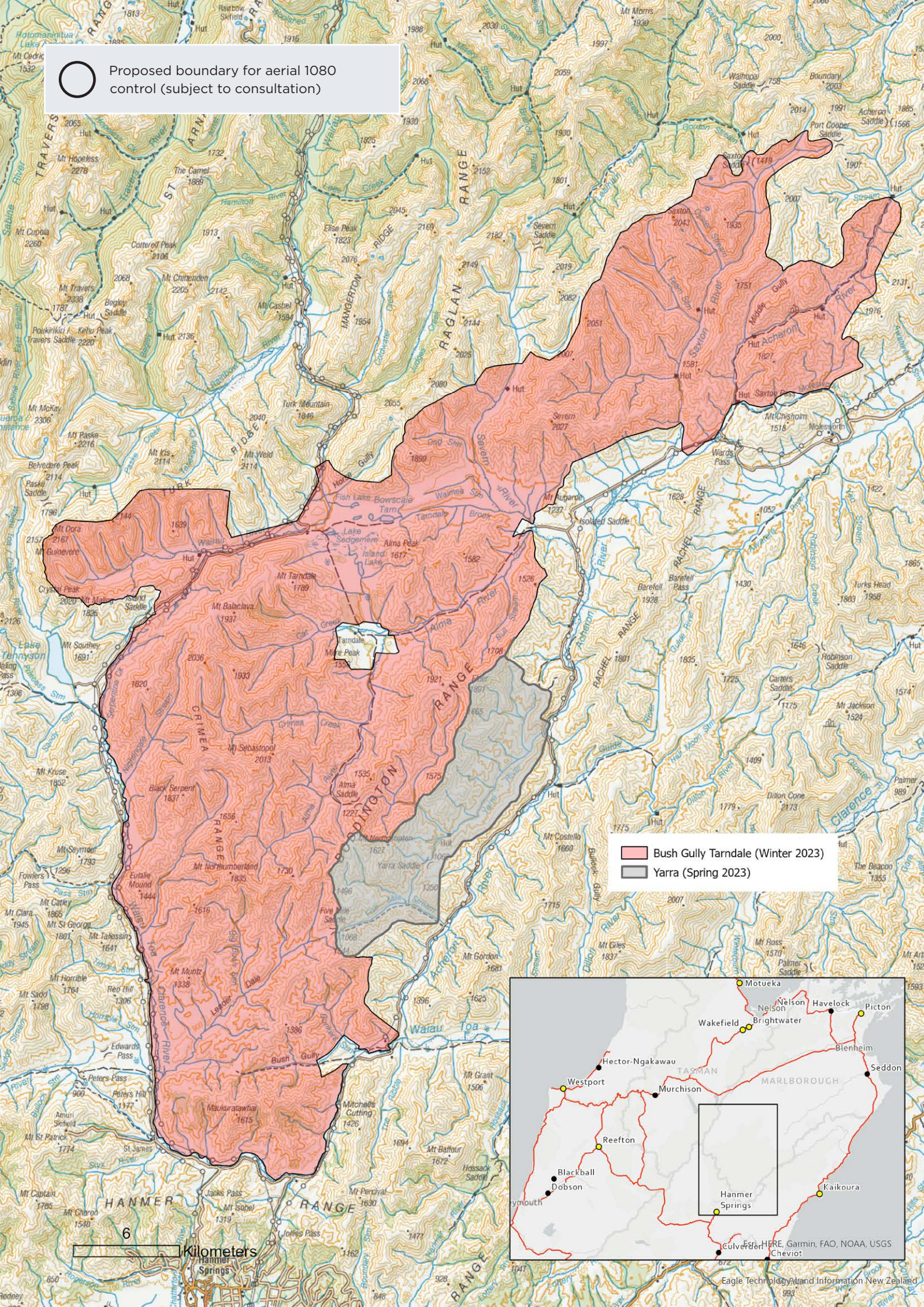
ospri.co.nz



0800 482 463



Proposed boundary for aerial 1080 control (subject to consultation)



Important information

Warning signs will be placed at all main access points to the operational area. Everyone must follow the cautions on the signs. There's no health risk when using this area as long as you follow these instructions:

Do not handle any bait or allow children to wander unsupervised. Cereal baits containing 1080 are dyed green.

Do not hunt or take game from within a two-kilometre radius of

the operational area for human or pet consumption. It's an offence to sell meat products that have been exposed to 1080. Hunting can resume approximately four months following the control work.

Please observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about the pesticide. Warning signs indicate that pesticide residues may still be present in the baits or carcasses. When the signs are officially removed, you can resume normal activities in the area.



Do not bring dogs into the area until the warning signs have been officially removed.

Dogs are particularly susceptible to 1080. They must not be allowed access to bait or poisoned carcasses which remain toxic to dogs until they have fully decomposed.

Free dog muzzles will be provided on request. Please contact OSPRI or the contractor to obtain a muzzle.



What to do if you suspect poisoning

Contact your local hospital or doctor, or **dial 111**

National Poisons Centre
0800 POISON (764 766)

If a domestic animal is poisoned, contact a local veterinarian.



Further information

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Contractor

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Links

- Controlling bovine TB and how and why 1080 is used in New Zealand: ospri.co.nz/tb-and-pest-control
- Recreational hunting, 'TB Information for Hunters' factsheet: ospri.co.nz
- Commercial hunting: Ministry for Primary Industries and Department of Conservation websites.



There is no risk to public drinking water

Biodegradable 1080 is highly soluble and does not persist in water or soil. Local health authorities apply strict conditions to aerial operations so that drinking water supplies are not contaminated. Safety has been confirmed by tests on several thousand water samples taken after aerial 1080 operations over many years.



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