

# Acheron East – Molesworth Bovine TB Control Operation



## Removing TB from Molesworth's wildlife

### What is planned

OSPRI is planning an aerial possum control operation on Molesworth Station from October 2022 as part of a wider plan to eradicate TB from Molesworth cattle by 2026. North Canterbury/Marlborough has an extensive history of bovine-TB infection in both livestock and wildlife. In Winter 2021 an OSPRI aerial operation treated approximately 80,000ha, a portion of Molesworth country. It was hugely successful in reducing possum numbers while reducing by-kill of non-target species, namely deer.

Aerial control over a large area and short timeframe is the key to effectively reducing possum numbers to a level where TB cannot be sustained in the wildlife population. This approach also minimises the risk of re-invasion by infected possums.

The Acheron East block will be aerially treated with biodegradable sodium fluoroacetate (1080), planned start date from October 2022. The operation will cover up to 62,500ha and will begin with aerial application tan coloured non-toxic pre-feed. 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. Deer repellent will be used in both the pre-feed and the toxic bait.

## Reducing deer by-kill during Molesworth possum control

### Deer on Molesworth

Deer are not the target of this operation, but deer deaths are anticipated even with the use of deer repellent on all bait.

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### Mitigating impact on deer

New deer repellent baits were used in the Molesworth 2021 aerals and were determined to be hugely successful at reducing deer by-kill. The same deer repellent will be used across the entire Acheron East 2022 aerial operation.

The aerial operation will take place from October 2022 onwards, coordinating with both the farming operations and favourable weather. Rain and snowfall facilitate rapid disintegration of baits.

### 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.

### What to expect from the operation

The operation will begin with the distribution of non-toxic, tan-coloured cereal pellets by helicopter. This “pre-feed” gives possums a taste for the pellets and overcomes bait shyness.

One to two weeks later (dependant on weather), toxic, green cereal pellets are applied by helicopter.

### Successful trials of aerial low sow baiting

In June 2021, we trialled two new approaches to aerial baiting on Molesworth.

**Severn Trial Area** – we treated 4,868 hectares with 50% less bait (1 kilogram per hectare). We used standard broadcast methods, so achieved complete coverage.

**Saxton Trial Area** – we treated 4,356 hectares with 60% less bait (0.8 kilograms per hectare). In this case we applied bait at 2 kilograms per hectare in 30-metre-wide strips, with non-treated gaps of 100 metres between strips.

Both trials achieved 100% poisoning of possums with lower sowing rates shown to be effective in dryland habitat where bait easily reaches the ground.

### Using less bait

Due to the success of the 2021 low-sow baiting trial, OSPRI will be using this method of bait application across the entire Acheron East treatment area. Toxic bait will be applied by helicopter at a rate of one kilogram per hectare, standard broadcast method.

6 gram bait pellets will be used, that’s about 4–6 baits in an area the size of a tennis court.

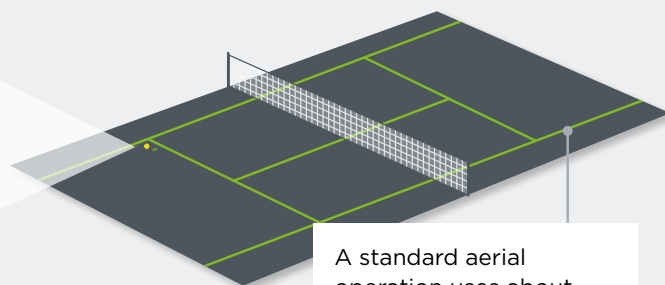
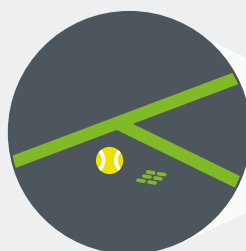
Research has shown that the home ranges of possums in high country terrain are larger than the ranges of forest dwelling possums.

Possums that forage wider areas are more likely to encounter and consume a lethal dose of bait even with reduced application (lower density).

### Minimal amounts of 1080 in bait



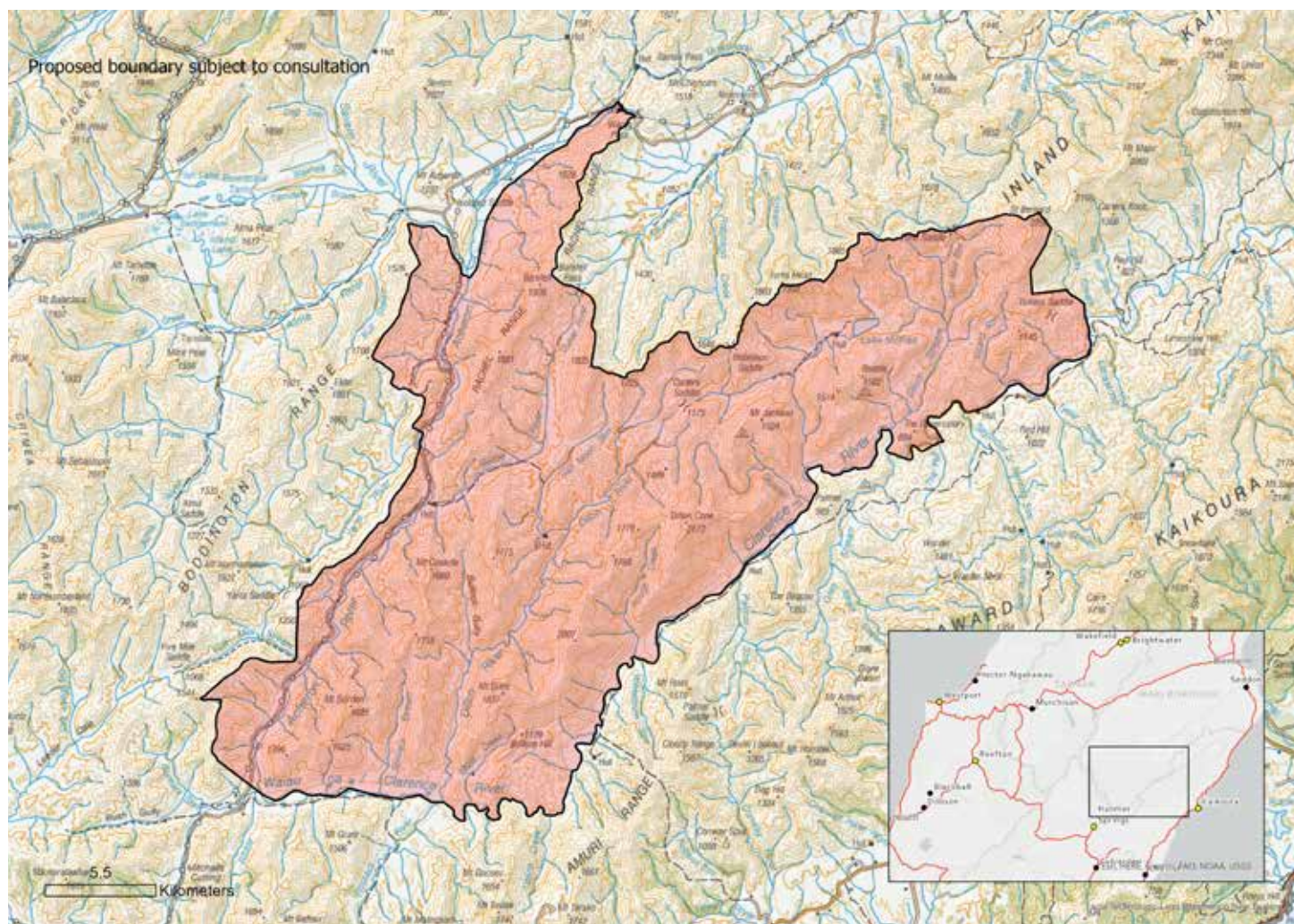
0.15% of pellet contains biodegradable 1080



A standard aerial operation uses about 4–6 baits in an area the size of a tennis court.\*

\*Illustration only. Not to scale.





## Sodium fluoroacetate (1080) bait

Each pellet contains a small proportion (0.15 percent) of biodegradable sodium fluoroacetate (also known as 1080). Biodegradable 1080 means it is broken down by micro-organisms in water and soil into harmless elements. It does not leave permanent residues in water, soil, plants, or animals. The operation 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.

## What happens now

This operation is planned to take place from October 2022. A contractor, Vector Free Marlborough Limited, will be delivering the operation on behalf of OSPRI's TBfree Programme. Before the 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 the operation starts. Notices will be published in local newspapers and warning signs will be placed at all likely access points to the operational area.



## Important information

**Warning signs will be placed at all main access points to the operational area and everyone must follow the cautions on the signs. There's no health risk when using this area as long 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.



### 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

#### OSPRI Christchurch Office

PO Box 8674, Riccarton,  
Christchurch 8440  
**P** 03 363 3090  
**E** [vectorsi@ospri.org.nz](mailto:vectorsi@ospri.org.nz)  
**W** [ospri.co.nz](http://ospri.co.nz)

#### Contractor

Vector Free Marlborough Ltd  
**P** Free phone 0508 548008  
**E** [communications@vectorfree.co.nz](mailto:communications@vectorfree.co.nz)  
**W** [vectorfree.co.nz](http://vectorfree.co.nz)

#### Links

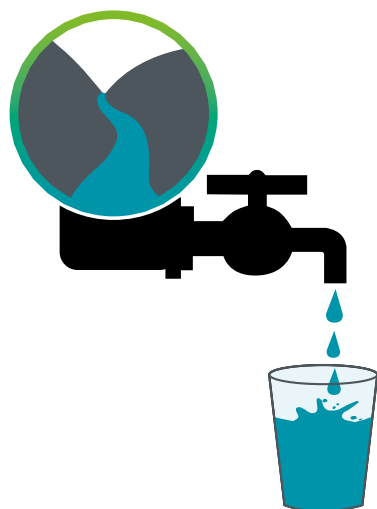
- Controlling bovine TB and how and why 1080 is used in New Zealand: [ospri.co.nz/tb-and-pest-control](http://ospri.co.nz/tb-and-pest-control)
- Recreational hunting, 'TB Information for Hunters' factsheet: [ospri.co.nz](http://ospri.co.nz)
- Commercial hunting: Ministry for Primary Industries and Department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



### Please note that dogs are prohibited on Molesworth Station.

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.

Dogs must not be brought into treatment areas until the warning signs have been officially removed.



### Drinking water recommendations

While toxin application takes place, and for 72 hours afterward, avoid taking water for drinking and cooking purposes from streams, lakes and tarns.

Where provided at huts and campsites, use alternative water supplies or bring in your own supply.

Local health authorities apply strict conditions to aerial operations so that public drinking water supplies are not contaminated, and testing of public supply is undertaken.