OSPRI | TBfree

National Aerial Operations Plan 2026

This document outlines proposed TBfree aerial possum control operations in 2026.

OSPRI, which manages the TBfree programme, is seeking specific feedback from people and organisations who may be affected by the proposed aerial disease control operations, including landowners and land users, farmers, hunters, and people involved in outdoor recreation.

Details about how to provide feedback are on the back cover, page 13. For further information, go to **www.ospri.co.nz/have-your-say**.

Please note that specific details and operational boundaries proposed in this document are indicative only and may change as a result of further planning and feedback. Final details will be communicated directly to affected parties, and through letters, public notifications, media and at **ospri.co.nz**.

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The TBfree programme

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Possums are the wildlife source of TB infection in cattle and deer in New Zealand, so possum control is a key activity for the TBfree programme, alongside livestock TB testing and movement control.

The TBfree programme aims to achieve the following:

- livestock is free of TB by 2026
- possums are free of TB by 2040
- TB is eradicated from New Zealand by 2050.

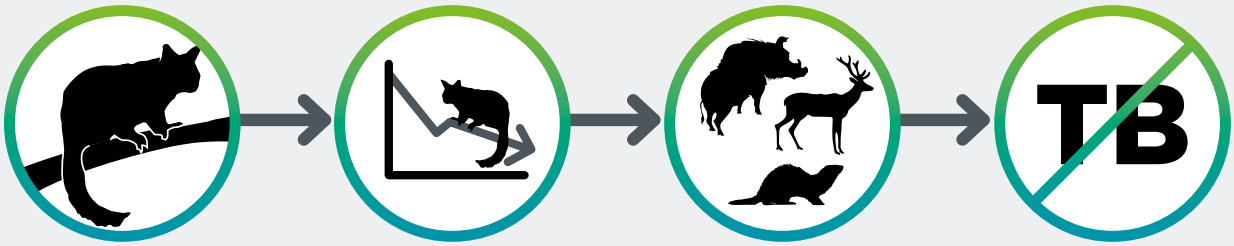
These objectives require maintaining very low possum numbers for significant periods of time through possum control. Most possum control work (more than 85%) is ground-based. In some areas, aerial 1080 operations are more cost-effective than other control methods, more efficient or the only effective method available.

As the TBfree programme progresses towards the eradication of TB from wildlife and livestock, possum control methods are constantly assessed and reprioritised to ensure the best use of resources to achieve eradication goals.

The road to TB eradication

OSPRI's operations are time-limited. First, the possum population is reduced to low numbers, sometimes through an aerial operation. It is then maintained at a low level over several years to break the disease cycle.

After control operations, checks are made to see if any TB can still be found in wildlife. If there is none, the area is declared TB free.



Possum control, year one

Possums spread TB. Getting numbers low will help stop TB.

Keeping possum numbers low

It's really important to keep possum numbers low over multiple years to break the TB cycle.

Testing wildlife

Wildlife is checked for signs of TB.

TB eradicated

There is no need for further control although checks are still made for TB.

Using 1080 for possum control

The careful use of biodegradable 1080 to control possums has been a key tool in significantly reducing TB in cattle and deer herds.

Sodium fluoroacetate (1080) is one of the most widely researched pest control tools. There have been extensive investigations into its use in New Zealand by both the Environmental Protection Agency and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment.

It has proven particularly effective in aerial baiting programmes to control possums over large areas of land or forest, or where the terrain makes access on foot difficult or inefficient.

Conservation and farming leaders have voiced strong support for the continued use of 1080 in New Zealand.

Success to date

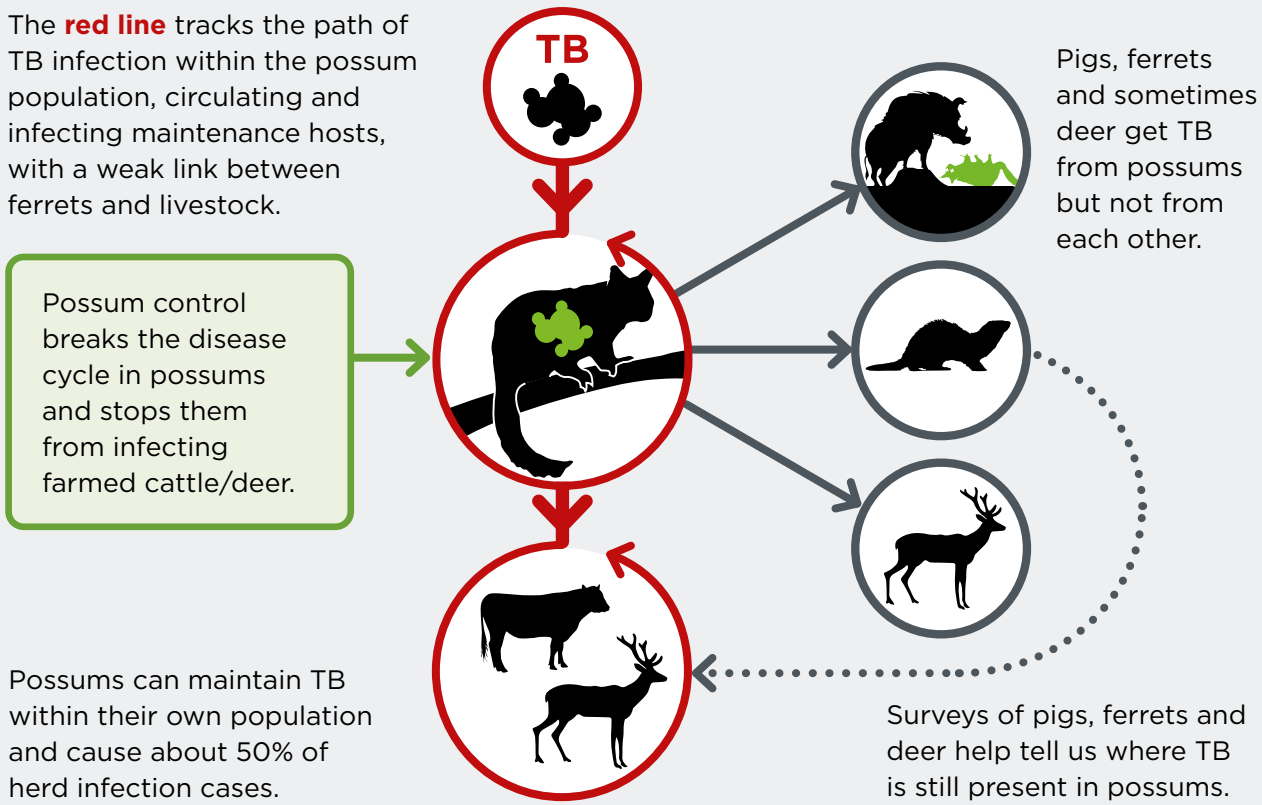
- TB eradicated from more than 4.6 million hectares.
- Infected herds reduced to 15 as at 30 June 2025 (down from 695 in 2000).

How we use 1080

Aerial application of 1080 is the most efficient and cost-effective method for controlling introduced possums and other predators such as rats and stoats over large areas with difficult access. 1080 is the only toxin registered for aerial application that ensures possum numbers are kept low enough to eradicate TB.

How we find and control the TB infection cycle

The **red line** tracks the path of TB infection within the possum population, circulating and infecting maintenance hosts, with a weak link between ferrets and livestock.



Proposed aerial operations for 2026

As part of our TBfree programme, we deliver our pest control operations through a framework of TB management areas (TMAs). TMAs are areas with known TB infection in livestock or wildlife. Each TMA has a specific TB control plan designed to eradicate TB as effectively as possible.

This map outlines the new aerial disease control activities proposed for 2026. Each region has a different disease control focus based on the status of infected herds and wildlife.

In 2026 aerial operations cover less than 5% of the proposed operational activity.

The majority of the remaining work involves ground-based pest control (approx. 65%) and making up the balance wildlife surveys (approx. 30%). For detail on the specific aerial operations proposed, please refer to the page numbers in the table of contents.

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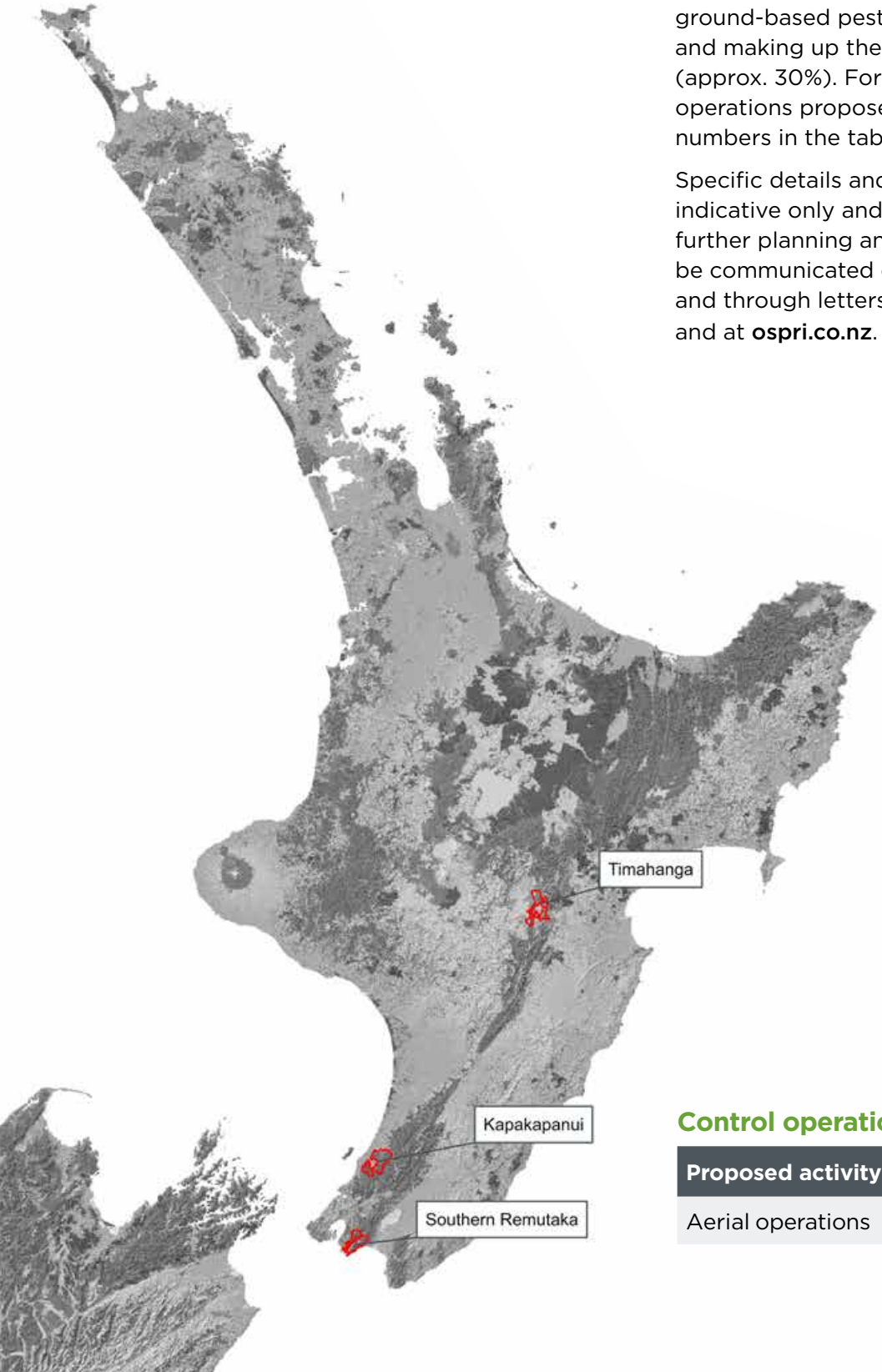


Control operations area coverage 2026

Proposed activity	North Island
Aerial operations	36,639 ha

Regional overviews

North Island

As part of ongoing efforts to eradicate bovine tuberculosis (TB) in the North Island, aerial pest control operations are proposed for 2026 in several key areas.

Aerial control is proposed for the Kapakapanui area, located within the Kāpiti-Wellington TMA. TB has been identified in local wildlife and in adjacent habitats. This will be the first time the area is treated under the TBfree programme.

Aerial control is also proposed for the Southern Remutaka area within the Remutaka-Hutt TMA. Bovine TB has been present in cattle herds in this region since the 1980s, and infected possums have been recorded within or near the TMA.

Aerial control is proposed for the Timahanga area, which spans the Timahanga and Ngamatea TMAs in Western Hawke's Bay. Recent TB infections have been detected in the Patoka-Puketitiri area. There have also been historical TB infection cases in surrounding region.

The proposed aerial operations complement ongoing ground control programmes and form a part of a wider control plan. These operations will help achieve the low possum populations needed to eliminate TB within their regions.

South Island

There are currently no planned aerial operations in the South Island for the 2026 calendar year. This is largely due to the timing of programme rather than a move away from this technique. It is possible some smaller aerial operations maybe be added to the programme as the disease programme evolves. If any additional aerial operations are added to the 2026 South Island, consultation with key interest groups will be prioritised.

Feedback from communities

This summary of OSPRI's proposed aerial pest management programme for 2026 has been prepared to give interested and affected parties an opportunity to provide feedback about the parameters of the operations, such as the possibility of using deer repellent, boundaries and the timing of the operation from a seasonal perspective.

OSPRI makes informed decisions by assessing feedback about the parameters of the operations, not the methodology or the use of 1080. While OSPRI is not responsible for regulation of 1080 all its operations are subject to regulations administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Opportunities for feedback

We are keen to listen to the views of all communities interested in the proposed aerial programme across New Zealand. The areas of operation are detailed in the next section of this document, and we input is encouraged on the form at the back of this document.

North Island Aerial Operations 2026

Timahanga, Hawke's Bay Region

The proposed timing for this operation is from July 2026.

Terrain and operational area

The Timahanga operational area is 89 km from Hastings along the Napier Taihape Road. The steep and rugged terrain comprises of indigenous forest, mānuka/kānuka scrub and tussock grassland.

The eastern side of the operation is located on a significant amount of Department of Conservation (DOC) land in Kaweka Forest Park. The boundary is the Ngaruroro River. The Ikawatea Stream borders the southern boundary of this control area.

The southern section of this area touches the Ruahine Ranges and reaches to the southern end of the Kaweka Ranges in the north. A portion of the control area is also on private farmland made up of scrub bush habitat.

This aerial project area was last treated in November 2020. In addition, ground control work has been ongoing in the Timahanga TMA and the neighbouring Ngamatea TMA, as well as aerial control in the adjacent Kaweka TMA since the last 2020 Timahanga aerial operation to support the TB disease objectives for the Timahanga TMA.

The total area is roughly 11,400 ha.

TB management area

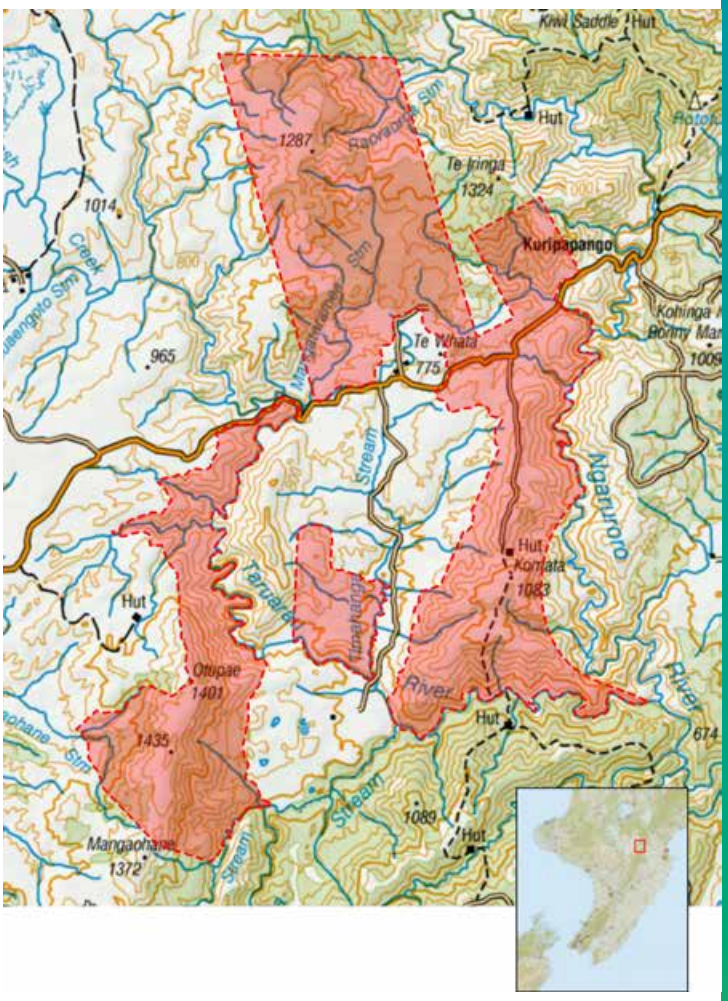
The area is part of the Timahanga and Ngamatea TMAs.

Consultation and collaboration

A third of this operation is on private land with some blocks also within DOC land in the Kaweka Forest Park along Comet Road (commonly known as the Sparrowhawk Range). Consultation with landowners is already under way.

Recent TB infection history

Historically TB has been found in deer within the control area of the Timahanga aerial project and on adjoining farmland. The cattle herd on the farmland directly adjoining the area has a long history of TB infection.



More recently a large station close by had a major TB breakdown in 2022 indicating that tuberculous vectors are still a risk in this area. A number of tuberculous wild animals have previously been found on this property.

The movement of wildlife along waterways running through this area has been suspected of causing the infection of a herd in the farmland to the east.

Control in this area serves to protect the herds from infected wildlife that may be present in the uncontrolled Kaweka Ranges.

Operational control method preferred

The area for proposed aerial treatment covers a vast area of steep and rugged terrain. As access by foot would be challenging therefore aerial treatment is the most effective control method.

Kapakapanui, Wellington Region

The proposed timing for this operation is from July 2026.

Terrain and operational area

The Kapakapanui aerial project is located inland from the Kāpiti Coast in the lower North Island. The project area runs along the foothills of the Tararua Ranges from north of the Maunganui peak in the south to the Ōtaki River in the north.

The project area is located next to Reikōrangi, a settlement with many small lifestyle and rural properties, and close to the township of Waikanae and State Highway 1.

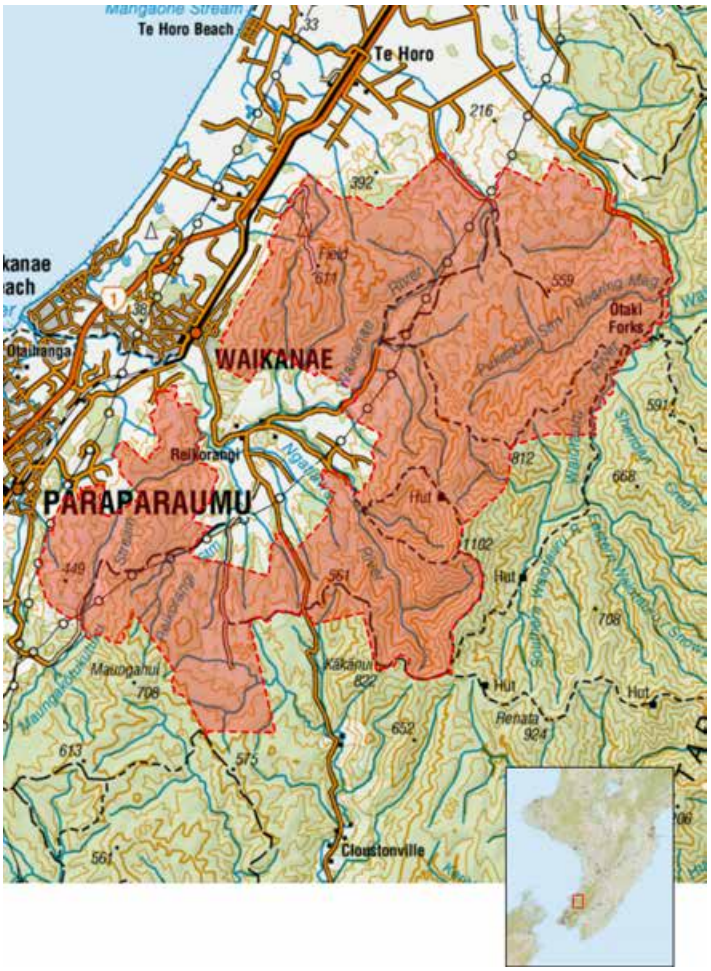
The project will cover approximately 14,700 ha. This area may change following consultation.

The habitat varies from dense native vegetation in DOC managed areas to regenerating scrub and commercial forestry on privately owned land. The area includes part of the Tararua Conservation Park, the Kaitawa Scenic Reserve and the Hemi Matenga Memorial Park.

There are several significant waterways that run through the project area – Waikanae River and its tributaries, Ngatiawa River, and Mangaone River. The Waikanae River catchment is the town water supply catchment area for Paraparaumu and Waikanae. The Ōtaki and Waiotauru Rivers are not within the project area however small tributaries feeding into them are.

The project area falls within the Greater Wellington Region and Kāpiti Coast District Council and is split between Mid Central and Capital & Coast Health Board.

Mangaone Walkway, Kapakapanui Track, Waiotauru Track, Parata Track and Kapakapanui Hut fall inside the project area. These tracks are very popular with hikers, mountain bikers, and hunters. There are also many other walking tracks within the area, both on public and private land. Just outside the project area is the Ōtaki River Campground and Parawai Lodge.



TB management area

The operational area falls within the Kāpiti-Wellington TB Management Area.

Consultation and collaboration

We have been in early discussions with iwi in the region including Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai, Ngā Hapu O Ōtaki, Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga, and Muaūpoko.

We are also consulting with other interested parties including the NZ Deer Stalkers Association (NZDA), Forest and Bird, Department of Conservation, Kāpiti Coast District Council (KCDC), Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC), and the Public Health Unit (PHU).

Recent TB infection history

TB has been identified in wildlife in the area as well as nearby habitat for at least the past decade. A possum monitor is planned to be carried out before the end of 2025.

Operational control method preferred

A vast majority of possum control in the region is done by local contractors using ground-based traps and hand-laid toxins. Aerial control is the preferred method in areas like Kapakapanui due to the dense bush cover and rugged nature of the terrain. This will be the first time this area has been treated under the TBfree programme.

Buffers may be required around some waterways in the area following discussion with the Kāpiti Coast District Council.

This is a popular area for recreational users. Public notices and early warning signage will be erected at all entry points to notify the public as the operation progresses.

Southern Remutaka, Wellington Region

The proposed timing for this operation is from July 2026.

Terrain and operational area

Located at the southern end of the Remutaka Range, the area surrounds the Ōrongorongo River with a steep-sided gorge extending north towards Wainuiomata. Native forest and scrub are the primary habitat types.

The project will cover approximately 10,700 ha.

TB management area

The operational area falls within the Remutaka-Hutt TMA.

Consultation and collaboration

We have been in early discussions with relevant iwi in the region including Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa-Tāmaki nui-ā-Rua, Rangitāne, Taranaki Whānui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika and Ngāti Toa Rangatira.

We have also begun consulting with other interested parties including the NZ Deer Stalkers Association (NZDA), Forest and Bird, Department of Conservation, Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC), and the Public Health Unit (PHU).

Recent TB infection history

TB has been found in cattle herds in all farmed areas of the TMA since the 1980s. The last known herd breakdown was in 2016 in the Ōrongorongo area. Infected possums have been found either in or very close to all of the parts of the TMA.

A number of infected possums and pigs have been caught in the Ōrongorongo Valley inside the Remutaka Forest Park over the past 17 years, and a TB infected pig found in Mangaroa Kaitoke in 2010/2011.

Operational control method preferred

The large area and dense bush makes ground access challenging and virtually impossible in some parts. Aerial control is the preferred method.

This is a popular area for recreational users including hunters and hikers. Public notices and early warning signage will be erected at all entry points to notify the public as the operation progresses.

Have your say

We invite feedback on our 2026 national plan for TBfree pest control operations. We are seeking feedback specifically on the nature, boundaries and timing of proposed operations.

We are not seeking feedback on wider issues such as the purposes of the TBfree programme or the use of 1080 for pest control in New Zealand.

OSPRI encourages engagement with interested communities and those affected by proposed TBfree operations, and invites input on this document until **30 September 2025** through several channels:

- By email to **consultation@ospri.co.nz**
- By post to **National TBfree Operations Consultation, PO Box 3412, Wellington 6140**
- By phone on **0800 482 463**
- By completing the form at **www.ospri.co.nz/have-your-say** website.

Please use the form below to submit your feedback on any of the proposed pest control operations outlined in this document. Threatening or abusive submissions will not be responded to and where necessary will be referred to the appropriate authorities.

Your feedback may become publicly available information. For this reason, please indicate clearly if your comments are commercially sensitive or if, for some other reason, you do not consider that they should be disclosed. Any request for non-disclosure will be considered under the Official Information Act 1982 and the Privacy Act 1993.

Your feedback will be used to help inform the final proposals. Thank you.

Name

Position and organisation

Area of interest (farmer, hunter, etc)

Phone

Email

Postal address

1. What is the proposed aerial operation/s you are commenting on?

2. What is the primary subject of your feedback?

- ☐ Timings of proposed operation
- ☐ Boundaries
- ☐ Impact on business or commercial activity
- ☐ General operational concerns
- ☐ Other (please state):

3. Please outline your feedback (attach additional feedback as required)