OSPRI | TBfree

National Aerial Operations Plan 2027

ospri.co.nz 0800 482 463

This document outlines proposed TBfree aerial possum control operations in 2027.

OSPRI manages the TBfree programme and annually seeks feedback from people and organisations who may be affected by proposed aerial disease control operations. This includes landowners and land users, farmers, hunters, and businesses or people involved in outdoor recreation.

Information about how to provide feedback is on page 22.
You can also visit **ospri.co.nz/have-your-say**.

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

Contents

The TBfree programme

Eradicating TB

The TBfree programme aims to eradicate TB from New Zealand by 2055.

Managing and controlling our possum population is a key part of the TBfree programme, alongside livestock movement control and on-farm testing. Pest control work is designed to reduce the number of possums – the main carrier and spreader of TB to cattle and deer herds.

By reducing and maintaining very low possum populations for significant periods of time we break the circulation of TB in wildlife.

Most possum control work (more than 85%) is carried out using ground-based methods, like trapping.

Aerial control using the 1080 toxin is efficient, cost effective and currently the only method that successfully reduces possum numbers over large, less accessible landscapes – due to their remoteness or the rugged nature of the terrain.

As the programme progresses towards TB eradication, in both wildlife and livestock, possum control methods are continually assessed, and the work is prioritised to ensure funding is used as effectively as possible.

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 Authority and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment.

It is 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 5.6 million hectares.
- Infected herds reduced to 19 as at 30 June 2026 (down from 695 in 2000).

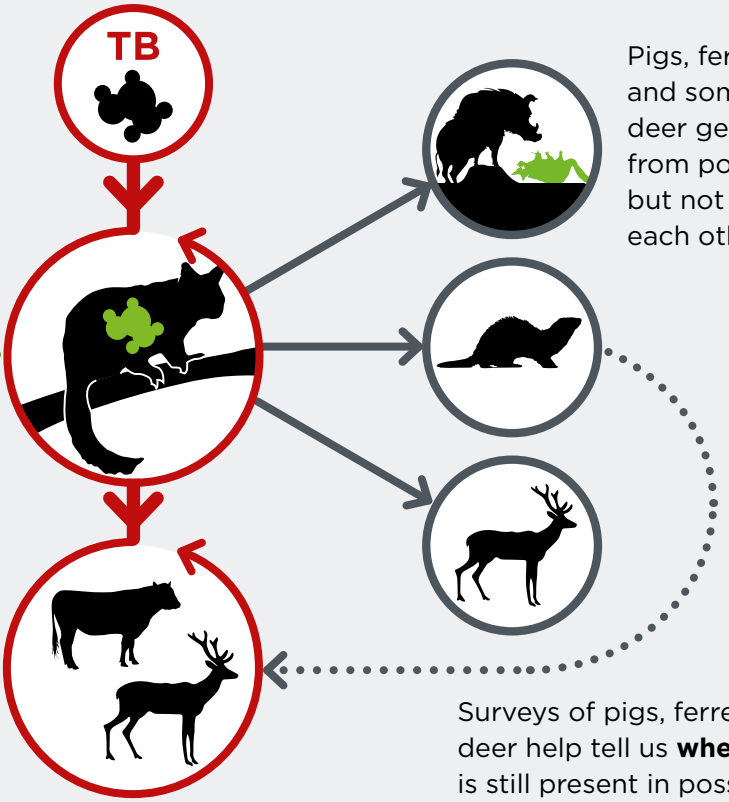
How we use 1080

Aerial application of 1080 is the most efficient and cost-effective method for controlling introduced possums and other predators such as rats, ferrets 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.

Possum control breaks the disease cycle in possums and stops them from infecting farmed cattle/deer.



Pigs, ferrets and sometimes deer get TB from possums but not from each other.

Possums can maintain TB within their own population and cause about 50% of herd infection cases.

Surveys of pigs, ferrets and deer help tell us **where** TB is still present in possums.

Case study

Deterring deer without compromising possum control

Field results from a series of large-scale operations are building real confidence that Prodeer repellent is doing exactly what it's designed to do: discouraging deer from taking 1080 bait, while continuing to deliver possum control.

Trials across Hawke's Bay, Kaweka Forest Park and Molesworth Station have told a consistent story. Deer are largely steering clear of Prodeer-treated bait. In Hawke's Bay, no red deer deaths were recorded following baiting and camera monitoring showed deer activity continuing as normal. Molesworth yielded a similar result. Only around five percent of radio-collared deer were lost, an improvement on earlier operations using standard bait, where mortality was far higher. More recent work in Kaweka Forest Park has reinforced this picture, with no sika deer by-kill recorded within the Prodeer treatment area.

Equally important is what the repellent doesn't do – it doesn't put possums off. Possum control rates remained strong right across the trial sites. In Hawke's Bay, possum activity fell by more than 95 percent following baiting. At Molesworth, every monitored possum consumed a fatal dose of the bait. Results from Kaweka showed similarly high reductions, even accounting for differences in how monitoring was carried out between sites.

Together, these results point to an operational balance that has previously eluded us: a bait that deer avoid, but possums readily take. For operations that need to reduce TB risk while minimising impacts on deer populations, that balance matters. It means progress on disease control doesn't have to come at the expense of the animals and hunting opportunities that communities in these areas value.

Working with deer, hunters and Herds of Special Interest

OSPRI has a commitment to building long-term relationships with farmers, landowners and land users to ensure it can continue to work as efficiently as possible with the funding and resources it has, to complete its goal of eradicating bovine TB by 2055.

We recognise the importance of hunting to many New Zealanders and aim to minimise the impacts of aerial operations wherever possible. This includes the use of deer repellent and the timing of operations to occur outside the roar where appropriate and budgetary constraints allow. Deer repellent toxin is more expensive than the standard toxin product, but it has been shown to considerably reduce poisoning of non-target animals.

A Herd of Special Interest (HOSI) is different to New Zealand's current management approach in that it aims to maintain a better-quality population of animals that hunters value, as well as focusing on reducing the environmental impacts of the animals.

We routinely work alongside the Department of Conservation on aerial operations, along with councils and other pest management agencies, to ensure resources and funding are used wisely and disruption to recreational land users is kept to a minimum.

We will continue to work closely with the Game Animal Council, the Sika Foundation and the New Zealand Deerstalkers' Association to mitigate the impacts on hunters from the TB eradication programme.

Proposed aerial operations for 2027

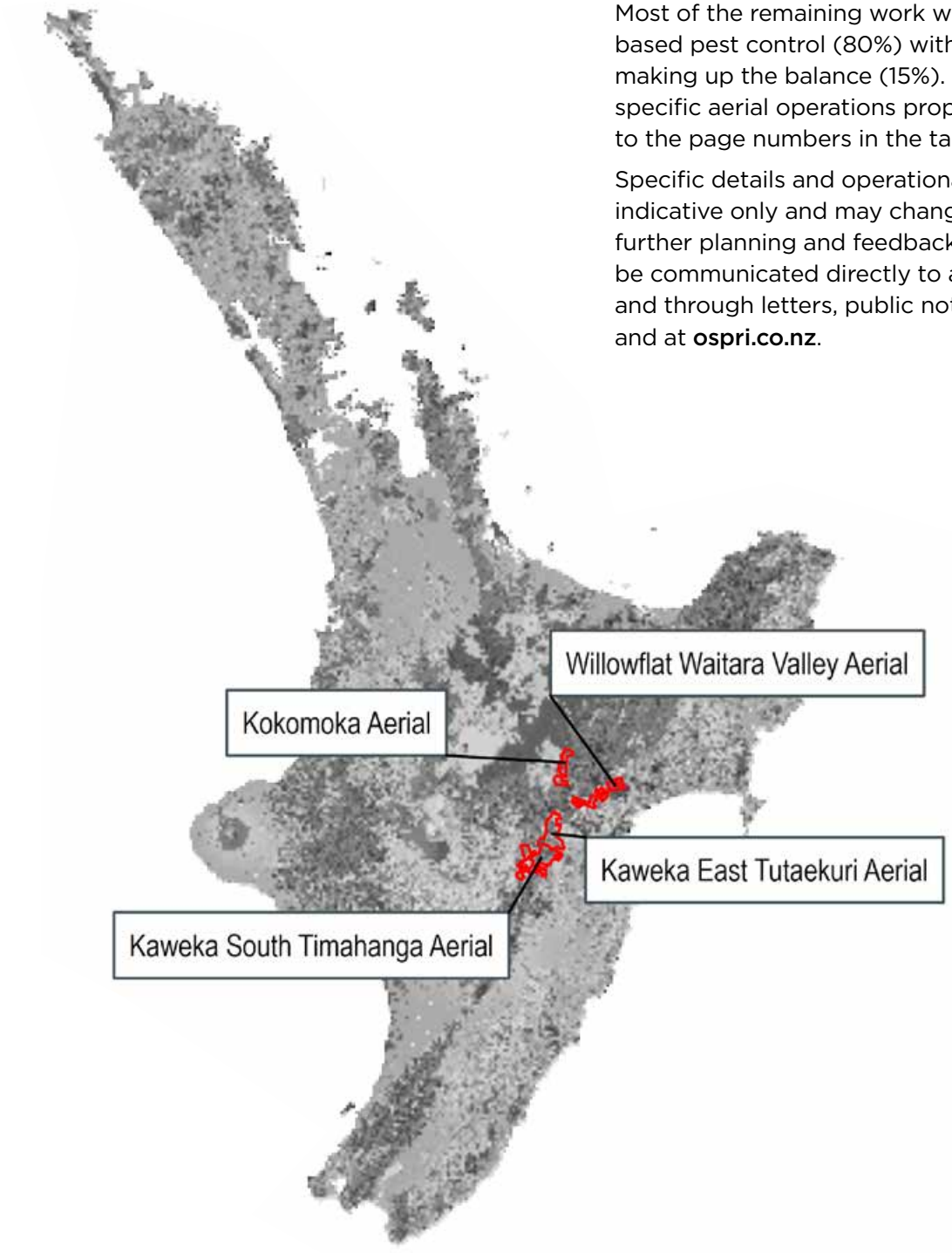
As part of our TBfree programme, pest control operations are delivered through a framework of TB management areas (TMAs). TMAs are areas with known TB infection in livestock or wildlife. Each TMA has a specific TB control plan designed to eradicate the disease, which may include possum control delivered by helicopter.

The following maps outline the new aerial disease control activities proposed for 2027. Each region has a different disease control focus, based on the status of infected herds and wildlife.

In 2027 aerial operations are expected to cover about 5% of proposed operational activity.

Most of the remaining work will involve ground-based pest control (80%) with wildlife surveys making up the balance (15%). For detail on the specific aerial operations proposed, please refer to the page numbers in the table of contents.

Specific details and operational boundaries 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**.



Control operations area coverage 2027

Proposed activity	North Island	South Island
Aerial operations	72,876 ha	8,303 ha

Regional overview

Bovine tuberculosis (TB) remains one of New Zealand's most challenging livestock diseases. While significant progress has been made towards eradication, infected wildlife populations continue to pose a risk to farming communities in some parts of New Zealand.

To break the cycle of infection and protect livestock, aerial pest control operations are proposed for 2027 in key areas of Hawke's Bay and Otago. These operations will complement ongoing ground control programmes and form part of a wider strategy to reduce possum populations to levels where TB can no longer persist in wildlife.

By targeting the source of infection, these operations will help protect farmers, reduce the risk of future herd infections, and move these regions closer to a TB-free future.

North Island

Hawke's Bay

Since 2019, Hawke's Bay has experienced a significant increase in TB-infected cattle herds. Investigations have shown that much of this infection can be traced back to TB-infected wildlife, particularly possums spreading TB from previously uncontrolled areas.

Recent genetic sequencing of the TB bacterium has provided a clearer picture of how the disease is spreading, linking infections in livestock to wildlife populations in and around the Kaweka Ranges. This evidence has helped confirm the areas where control efforts are most needed.

Kaweka East, Hawke's Bay Region

Parts of this area were treated in 2022 as part of the Hawke's Bay TB response. The proposed 2027 operation will extend control into neighbouring untreated areas, reducing the risk of infected wildlife spreading disease from the Kaweka Ranges to surrounding farms.

Kaweka South, Hawke's Bay Region

Like Kaweka East, sections of this area were treated in 2022. Extending control into adjacent untreated habitat will help close remaining gaps in the programme and further reduce the risk of TB transmission from wildlife into livestock.

Willow Flat – Waitara Valley, Hawke's Bay Region

Willow Flat – Waitara Valley has previously been aerially treated as part of the wider Hawke's Bay TB response programme. Ongoing control in this area is important for reducing TB in wildlife populations, minimising the risk of disease spread to neighbouring farmland, and supporting the long-term goal of bovine TB eradication.

Kokomoka, Taupō District

Kokomoka has a recent history of TB infection in both livestock and wildlife. The area was previously treated in 2022 to reduce the movement of disease from forested habitat into adjacent farmland.

Ongoing management is required to maintain low possum numbers and prevent reinfection from nearby wildlife reservoirs. This will help contain the disease and prevent it from spreading further across the region.

South Island

Otago

Otago is a long-established risk area for TB and has seen extensive control work over many years, including both aerial and ground-based operations. In 2027 two aerial operations are proposed to address gaps in control where access on foot is difficult and limits the effectiveness of ground-based methods. These operations are important to achieving TB eradication in the region.

Benmore, Otago Region

This area has not previously been treated aerially, and challenging terrain has limited the effectiveness of ground-based control. In 2024, a TB-infected ferret was detected in the area, confirming the presence of disease in local wildlife. An aerial operation will provide comprehensive coverage to reduce wildlife populations and remove a potential source of TB infection.

Clear Stream, Otago Region

Like Benmore, this area represents a gap in the current control programme. The detection of a TB-infected pig in 2023 signalled the need for further work, with aerial control identified as the most effective method.

Why these areas?

These aerial operations have been carefully selected to target remaining wildlife reservoirs that sustain TB in the environment. By reducing infection at its source, we can protect livestock, support farming communities, and make lasting progress towards eliminating bovine TB from Hawke's Bay, East Taupō, Otago, and ultimately New Zealand.

Feedback

We welcome input from communities on the proposed aerial programme. The areas of operation are outlined in the next section of this document. Information about how to provide feedback is on page 22. You can also visit **ospri.co.nz/have-your-say**.

This summary of OSPRI's proposed aerial pest management programme for 2027 has been prepared to give interested and affected parties the opportunity to provide feedback on key operational parameters. These may include the use of deer repellent, operational boundaries and timing of the operations.

OSPRI makes informed decisions by carefully considering feedback on these operational parameters. This does not cover the methodology used or the use of 1080. While OSPRI does not regulate 1080, all operations must comply with regulations administered by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

North Island Aerial Operations 2027

Kokomoka Takahiapo Aerial, Hawke's Bay Region

The proposed timing for this operation is from October 2027.

Terrain and operational area

The operational area is located along the eastern edge of the Waipunga Forest and Whirinaki Te Pua-a-Tāne Conservation Park. It extends into the Kaingaroa Forest and includes a mixture of exotic forest and native forest. The southern section of the area, Takahiapo, is Public Conservation Land.

Recent TB infection history

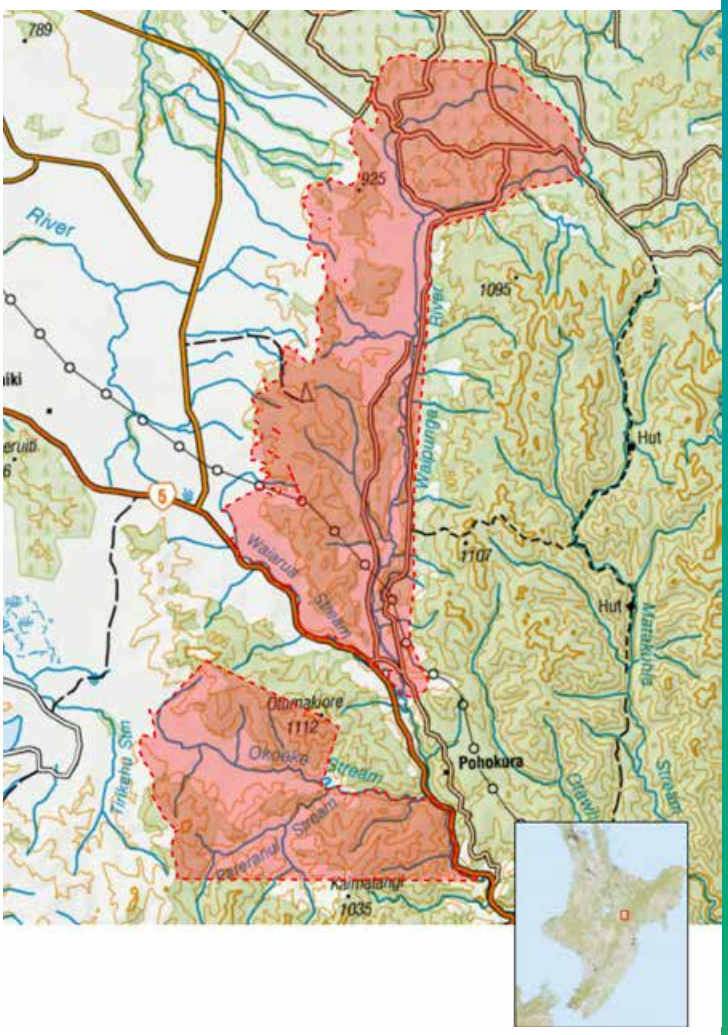
The Kokomoka and Takahiapo operational areas are strategically important because they fill the gap between a known TB infection site and surrounding infected herds. DNA sequencing of infected wildlife and livestock provides strong evidence that TB is connected across the area, indicating that the disease has spread from the Waipunga Forest, where TB was detected in possums in 2018. The most recent confirmation of this spread is a TB-positive wild pig found in 2024 that carried the same TB strain.

This evidence highlights the ongoing risk of disease spread across this corridor. It supports the need for sustained operational intervention to interrupt transmission and prevent further spillover.

Operational control method preferred

Effective TB eradication requires consistent coverage across the entire operational area. Due to the size of the operational area and its steep and difficult terrain, ground-based control is either impractical or unlikely to achieve the necessary coverage.

Aerial 1080 is the most effective, efficient, and reliable method for achieving consistent landscape-scale control in this area. This will be supported by ground control activity in nearby areas.



The sowing rates for this operation are deliberately low. The block will be pre-fed with approximately 1 kg/ha of 6-gram non-toxic cereal bait, followed by an operational application of 2 kg/ha of toxic, 12-gram, cereal bait. Both pre-feed and toxic bait will be lured with cinnamon to maximise palatability and uptake by possums.

Willow Flat – Waitara Valley Aerial, Hawke's Bay Region

The proposed timing for this operation is from July 2027.

Terrain and operational area

The proposed aerial operation area is located between Tarawera in the west and Willow Flat in the east. The operational block covers a mix of hill country and river valleys.

The Mōhaka River runs through the centre of the operational area. Treatment blocks are located on both the northern and southern sides of the river. It largely separates the Waitara Valley area to the south from the Willow Flat area to the north.

The northern edge of the operational area reaches into the lower margins of Te Urewera Ranges, which is steep and rugged terrain. Overall, the area includes a mix of farmland, commercial forestry, and recreational hunting areas.

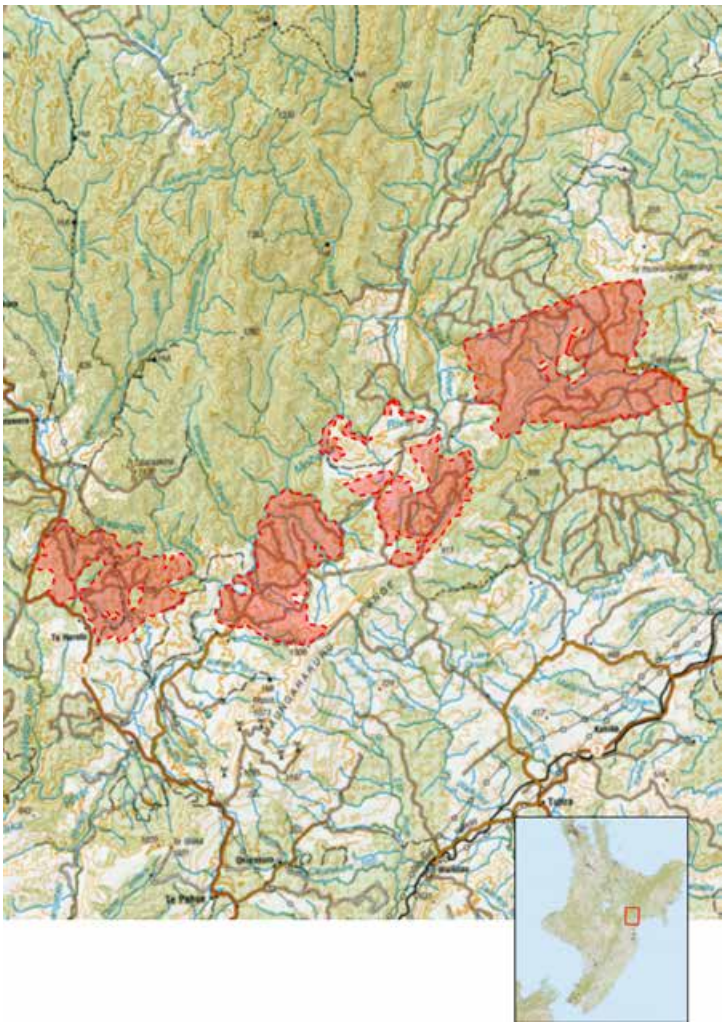
Recent TB infection history

The operational area was previously treated through aerial control operations in 2020 and 2021 as part of the Hawke's Bay TB response, which significantly reduced vector (or possum) populations. However, DNA sequencing of lesions from a recently infected herd shows both reinvasion from the Waipunga source area and the continued presence of local TB strains.

This indicates that TB persists in local wildlife and that, despite previous control efforts, further work is required to reduce vector or possum numbers.

Operational control method preferred

Effective TB eradication requires consistent coverage across the entire operational area. Due to the size of the operational area and its dense bush habitat, ground-based control is either impractical or unlikely to achieve the necessary coverage.



Aerial 1080 is the most effective, efficient, and reliable method for achieving consistent landscape-scale control in this area. This will be supported by ground control activity in nearby areas.

The sowing rates for this operation are deliberately low. The block will be pre-fed with approximately 1 kg/ha of 6-gram non-toxic cereal bait, followed by an operational application of 2 kg/ha of toxic, 12-gram, cereal bait. Both pre-feed and toxic bait will be lured with cinnamon to maximise palatability and uptake by possums.

Kaweka East Aerial, Hawke's Bay Region

The proposed timing for this operation is from June 2027.

Terrain and operational area

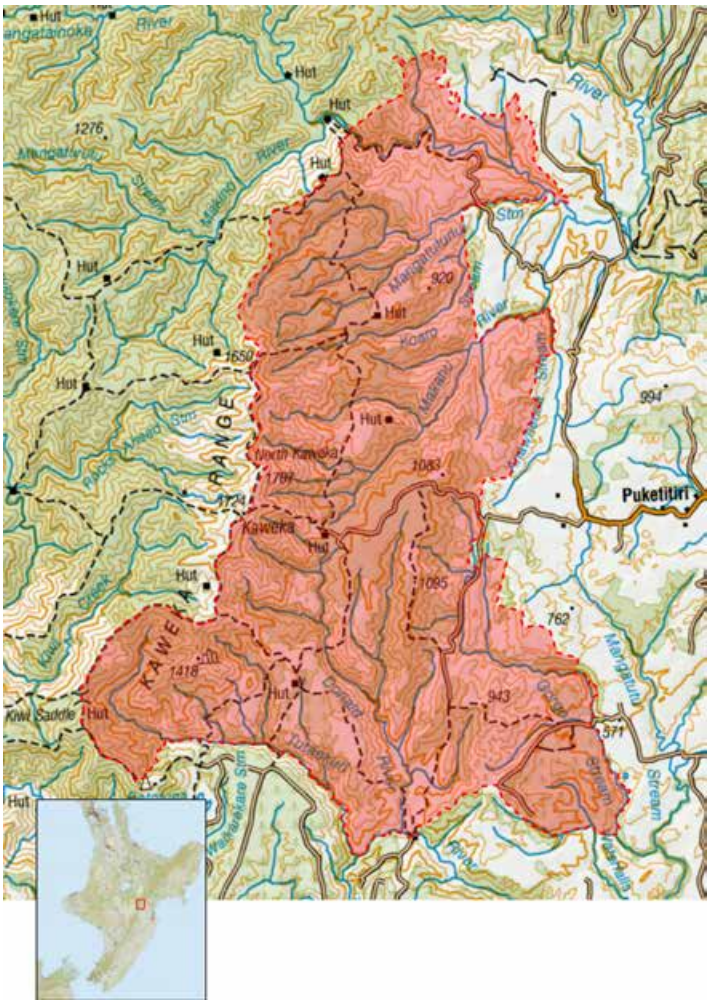
The proposed operational area is in the Kaweka Forest Park, covering backcountry between the Mōhaka and Tutaekuri River catchments. The northern boundary extends from the Mōhaka River to the edge of nearby farmland. To the west, it follows the Kaweka Range along the main track. The southern boundary is defined by the Tutaekuri River and its upper tributaries east of Kuripapango. The eastern boundary follows forest catchments and the farmland edges, before linking back to the northern boundary.

Recent TB infection history

The area has a recent history of TB in livestock herds. Genetic testing of TB samples from infected cattle shows that a TB strain usually found west of the Kaweka Range has spread to the eastern side, most likely through infected wildlife, primarily possums. This strain has now been found in three infected herds and is different from the strain linked to the original Hawke's Bay TB outbreak.

Parts of the operational area, particularly along the eastern boundary, were treated in 2022 as part of the Hawke's Bay TB response.

The spread of the Kaweka strain into Hawke's Bay herds shows that the previous control area has not been enough to stop TB moving from the Kaweka wildlife reservoir into surrounding farmland. To address this risk, the operational area will be extended further into previously untreated parts of Kaweka Forest Park. This work aims to reduce the spread of TB from infected wildlife to livestock and support the long-term goal of eliminating TB from the area.



Operational control method preferred

Monitoring carried out in 2024 and 2025 in the northern part of the operational area, particularly near adjacent farmland, indicates that possum numbers are higher than 0.5 possums per hectare which is enough to sustain TB in possums.

Further into the Kaweka Forest Park, possum numbers are expected to be at or near levels where disease can spread easily, as these areas have not had large-scale control in recent years.

Effective TB eradication requires consistent coverage across the entire operational area. Due to the size of the operational area and its steep and difficult terrain, ground-based control is either impractical or unlikely to achieve the necessary coverage.

Details regarding deer repellent use and bait sowing rates are provided on the following page.

Aerial 1080 is the most effective, efficient, and reliable method for achieving consistent landscape-scale control in this area. This will be supported by ground control activity in nearby areas.

OSPRI understands that this area is a valued hunting area. Following the successful deer repellent trial on sika deer in 2022, OSPRI intends to use deer repellent as part of this operation. The operation is proposed to be flown from June to reduce effects on hunting.

The sowing rates for this operation are deliberately low. The block will be pre-fed with approximately 1 kg/ha of 6-gram non-toxic cereal bait, followed by an operational application of 2 kg/ha of toxic, 12-gram, cereal bait. Both pre-feed and toxic bait will contain deer repellent and be lured with cinnamon to maximise palatability and bait uptake by possums.

Kaweka South Aerial, Hawke's Bay Region

The proposed timing for this operation is from July 2027.

Terrain and operational area

The Kaweka South aerial operational area is approximately 90 km west from Hastings along Napier–Taihape Road. It covers a remote backcountry area across the southern Kaweka Range and extends towards the northern Ruahine Range. It includes land managed as part of Kaweka Forest Park and adjoining private farmland.

The northern boundary follows the upper Ngaruroro River and its catchments. The eastern boundary runs through public conservation land and along the edge of farmland. The southern boundary extends towards the northern edge of the Ruahine Range, while the western boundary follows forest farmland interface. The area is mostly remote backcountry used for hunting and tramping.

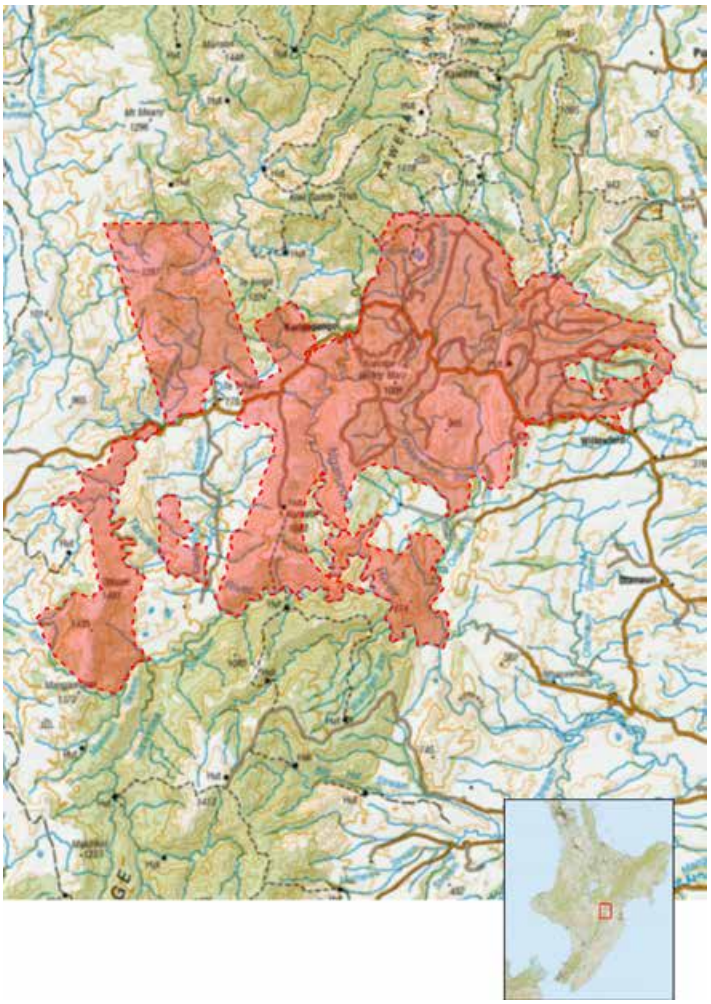
Consultation

OSPRI consulted on part of this operation during the 2026 consultation process and now proposes to align the timing of this work with the Kaweka East Tutaekuri operation.

Recent TB infection history

The area has a recent history of TB in livestock. Genetic testing of TB samples from infected cattle shows that a TB strain usually found west of the Kaweka Range has spread to the eastern side, most likely through infected wildlife, primarily possums. This strain has now been found in three infected herds and is different from the strain linked to the original Hawke's Bay TB outbreak.

Parts of the operational area were treated in 2022 during the Hawke's Bay TB response. However, TB has continued to spread from wildlife into nearby farmland, showing the previous control area was not large enough.



To reduce this risk, the operational area will be extended further into previously untreated parts of Kaweka Forest Park. This work aims to reduce the spread of TB from infected wildlife to livestock and support the long-term goal of eliminating TB from the area.

Operational control method preferred

Effective TB eradication requires consistent coverage across the entire operational area. Due to the size of the operational area and its steep and difficult terrain, ground-based control is either impractical or unlikely to achieve the necessary coverage.

Aerial 1080 is the most effective, efficient, and reliable method for achieving consistent landscape-scale control in this area. This will be supported by ground control activity in nearby areas.

Details regarding deer repellent use and bait sowing rates are provided on the following page.

OSPRI understands that parts of this area are valued hunting areas. Following the successful deer repellent trial on sika deer in 2022, OSPRI intends to use deer repellent across parts of this operational area depending on landowner consent. To reduce impacts on hunting, the operation is proposed to commence in July.

The sowing rates for this operation are deliberately low. The block will be pre-fed with approximately 1 kg/ha of 6-gram non-toxic cereal bait, followed by an operational application of 2 kg/ha of toxic, 12-gram, cereal bait. Both pre-feed and toxic bait will contain deer repellent and be lured with cinnamon to maximise palatability and bait uptake by possums.

South Island Aerial Operations 2027

Clear Stream Aerial, Otago Region

The proposed timing for this operation is from May 2027.

Terrain and operational area

Located south of Otematata, the eastern boundary of this operation largely follows Clear Stream. The southern boundary overlaps with part of the Oteake Conservation Park.

Recent TB infection history

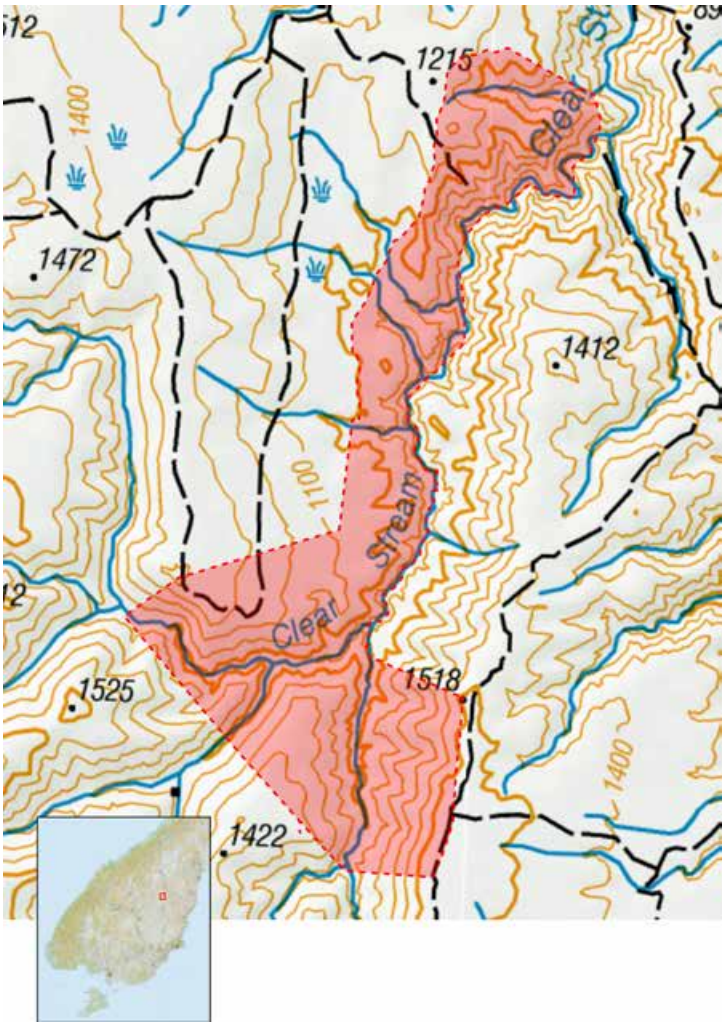
This operation is part of the vector control work in the Otago TMA areas where reducing TB risk is a focus of our programme. It aims to prevent the spread of TB in possums and transmission to livestock. The most recent infected wildlife was a pig found in 2023.

Operational control method preferred

Effective TB eradication requires consistent coverage across the entire operational area. Due to the size of the operational area and its steep and difficult terrain, ground-based control is either impractical or unlikely to achieve the necessary coverage.

Aerial 1080 is the most effective, efficient, and reliable method for achieving consistent landscape-scale control in this area. This will be supported by ground control activity in nearby areas.

The sowing rates for this operation are deliberately low. The block is proposed to be pre-fed with approximately 1 kg/ha of 6-gram non-toxic cereal bait, followed by an operational application of 2 kg/ha of toxic, 6-gram, cereal bait. Both pre-feed and toxic bait will be lured with cinnamon to maximise palatability and bait uptake by possums.



Benmore Aerial, Otago Region

The proposed timing for this operation is from May 2027.

Terrain and operational area

The operational area covers the upper Benmore range and includes both DOC and private land.

Recent TB infection history

This operation is part of the vector control work in the Otago TMA areas where reducing TB risk is a focus of our programme. It aims to prevent the spread of TB in possums and transmission to livestock.

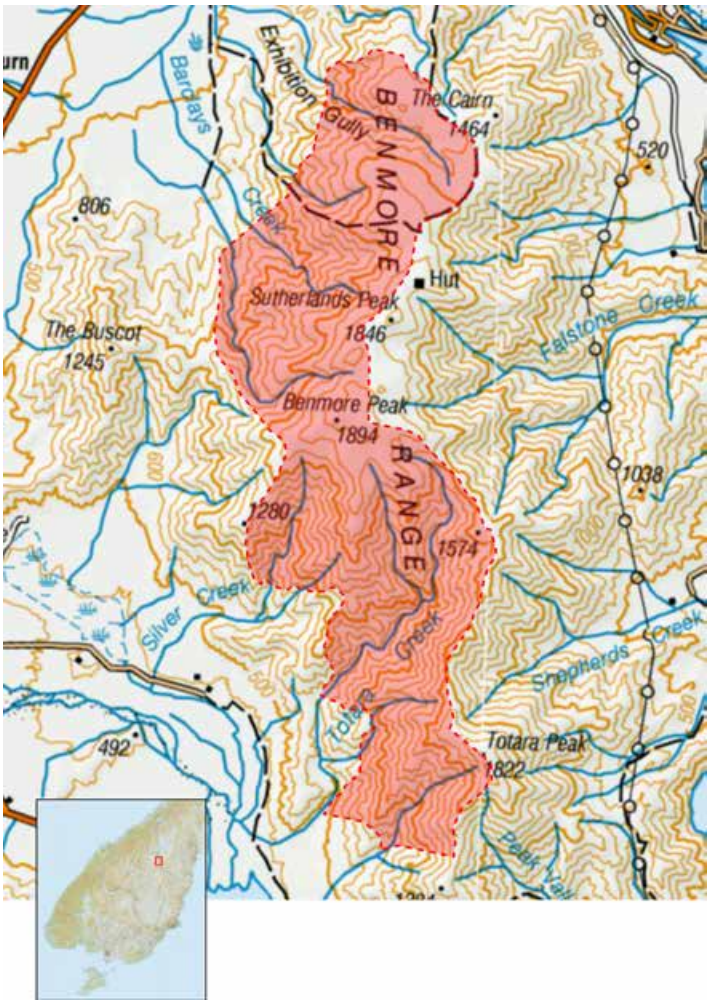
The most recent nearby herd infection was in 2011, and the most recent TB-positive wildlife detection was a ferret in 2024. This will be the first aerial operation in the area.

Operational control method preferred

Effective TB eradication requires consistent coverage across the entire operational area. Due to the size of the operational area and its steep and difficult terrain, ground-based control is either impractical or unlikely to achieve the necessary coverage.

Aerial 1080 is the most effective, efficient, and reliable method for achieving consistent landscape-scale control in this area. This will be supported by ground control activity in nearby areas.

The sowing rates for this operation are deliberately low. The block is proposed to be pre-fed with approximately 1 kg/ha of 6-gram non-toxic cereal bait, followed by an operational application of 2 kg/ha of toxic, 6-gram, cereal bait. Both pre-feed and toxic bait will be lured with cinnamon to maximise palatability and bait uptake by possums.



Map boundaries are indicative only and are subject to change after consultation.
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Have your say

We invite feedback on our 2027 national plan for TBfree pest control operations. We are seeking feedback specifically on the nature, boundaries and timing of proposed operations.

Please provide any feedback on the proposals in this document by **30 September 2026** using one of the options below:

- Online form: **ospri.co.nz/have-your-say**
- Email: **consultation@ospri.co.nz**
- Phone: **0800 482 463**

You can post your feedback using the form below: National TBfree Operations Consultation, PO Box 3412, Wellington 6140.

Please note we are not seeking feedback on the purposes of the TBfree programme or the use of 1080 for pest control in New Zealand. Submissions that are threatening or abusive will not be responded to and may be referred to the appropriate authorities.

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)

What happens after consultation

All feedback received will be carefully considered. We will provide an overall consultation report outlining the feedback received and how it has influenced the final operational proposals.

Privacy

As part of this consultation, we will collect your name, position/organisation and submission and, if you choose to provide them, your contact details (such as your phone number and email address). We collect this information so that we can consider your feedback on the proposed 2027 National Aerial Operations Plan and use it to help inform the final proposals. TBfree New Zealand Limited, as part of OSPRI, is responsible for the personal information collected during this consultation and will deal with it in accordance with the Privacy Act 2020.

Your name and submission may become publicly available. Providing contact details is optional, but it helps us follow up with you if we have questions about your submission. Your contact details will not be published if your submission is made publicly available. Submissions made using the online form are collected through Microsoft Forms on our behalf.

Submissions may also be subject to requests under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), which requires information to be released unless there are sufficient grounds for withholding it, as set out in sections 6 and 9 of the OIA. If you think there are grounds to withhold specific information from publication – for example, because it is commercially sensitive or personal – please make this clear in your submission or contact us directly. Any decision to withhold information under the OIA is reviewable by the Ombudsman, who may direct us to release it.

You have the right to ask for access to the personal information we hold about you and to request that we correct it. If you have any privacy queries, or wish to access or correct your information, please contact us at **consultation@ospri.co.nz**. Further detail on how we collect, store, use and disclose personal information is set out in OSPRI's Privacy Statement at **ospri.co.nz/privacy**.

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