

Eradicating TB: When risk areas become vector-free

When TBfree declares freedom from disease in an area's wildlife, the status changes from Vector Risk Area (VRA) to Vector Free Area (VFA).

Towards TB eradication

TB eradication is a key objective of the National Pest Management Plan. As such, the NPMP outlines an overarching objective of achieving:

- TB freedom in Livestock by 2026
- TB freedom in possums by 2040
- Biological eradication of TB in New Zealand by 2055.

In New Zealand, areas where Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) is found in maintenance hosts such as possums are classified as TB Vector Risk Areas (VRAs).

These areas require control as possums are a proven transmitter ('vector') of TB between wildlife and farmed livestock. Sustained and intensive control of possums over large geographic areas reduces the population to a level where the disease cannot be maintained or passed on to other species. When possum populations are held at low levels for a long period of time and as surveys indicate that the wild animal population is free of the disease, TB can be declared eradicated. The area then becomes a Vector Free Area.



Our Goals



2026

TB freedom in cattle and deer herds



2040

TB freedom in possums



2055

Biological eradication

What is a VRA?

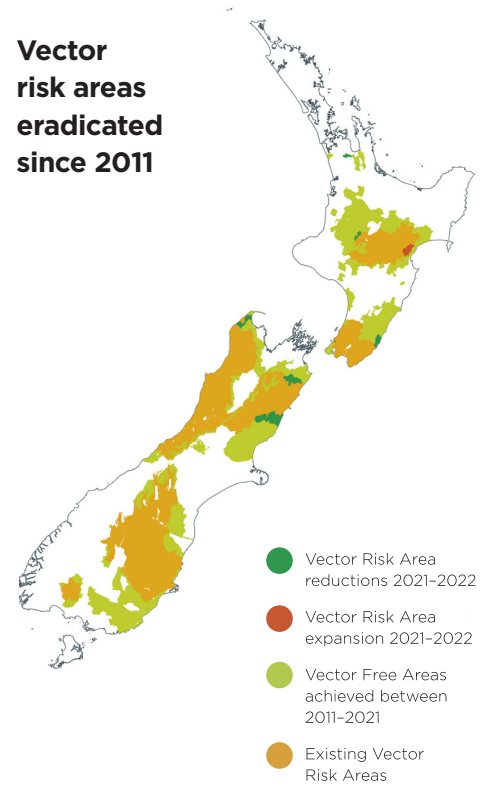
A Vector Risk Area is a defined geographical area where TB is being maintained in the wildlife population. This is indicated either by historical epidemiological information from infected cattle and deer herds, or by the discovery of tuberculosis in wild animals classed as TB maintenance hosts, such as possums.

As part of the work of the TBfree programme towards eradication TB, these are the areas targeted with possum control operations. Though effective possum control, the population can be kept low enough that disease cannot persist.

Then scientific proof of freedom (POF) can be used to declare an area free of vector risk (VFA).

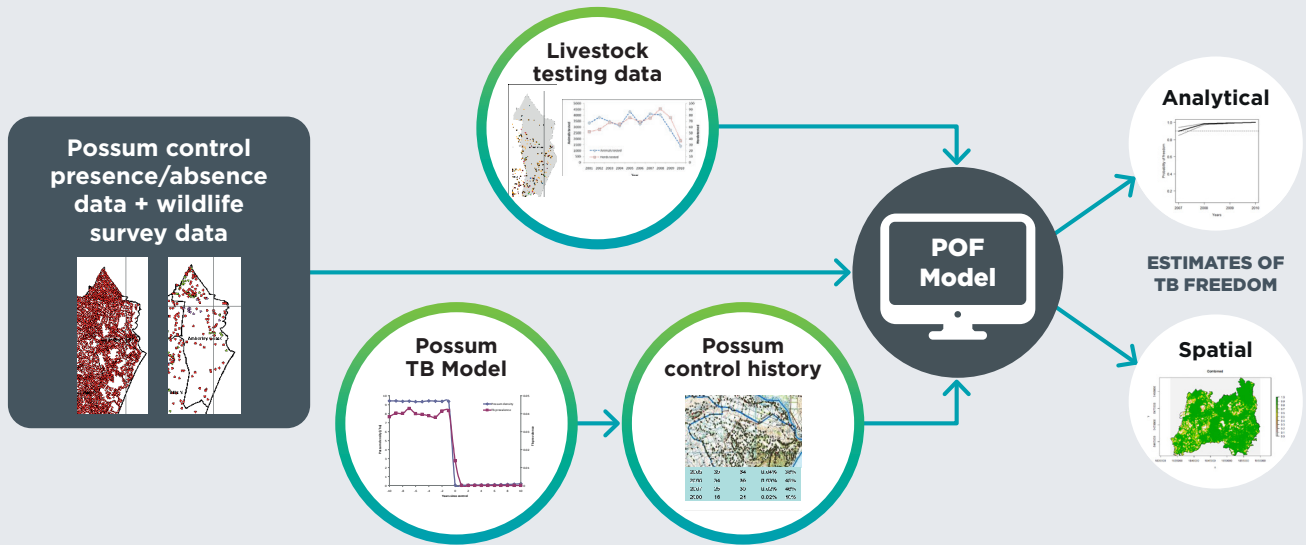
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Vector risk areas eradicated since 2011



Proof-of-Freedom Framework

(POF) MODEL



Proof of freedom

The Proof of Freedom (POF) model provides an assessment on whether TB has been removed from the possum population within a defined geographic area. This assessment guides decisions on the need for further vector control or surveillance activities or supports the decision to cease these activities as TB has been eradicated.

In essence, the POF model estimates the probability that previous possum control has been sufficient to eradicate TB from a defined area.

What happens after TB has been eradicated?

When an area has been declared vector-free, possum control activity for the purposes of TB eradication can cease with resources moved to other areas where TB remains in wildlife.

Until TB is eradicated from New Zealand, there remains a risk of TB being transmitted through livestock movements so TB vigilance when buying or grazing stock is essential. Ensuring your NAIT records a correct and up to date will also assist tracing if a disease incursion occurs.

The continued assessment of the TB status of an area occurs through TB testing and slaughter surveillance

of cattle and deer from the area, in some cases wild animal surveys maybe undertaken periodically.

TB testing frequency is reassessed following a VRA being moved to a VFA with any changes occurring on the 1 of March.

Possum populations will increase following the cessation of possum control for TB purposes. In some areas, the region council will take over management of possum populations through a landowner/council partnership or a possum control programme.

How can local farmers support the new disease-free status?

Farmer support for the TB Plan has been critical and enabled the successes to date:

Farmers can continue work with the TB scheme by:

- Keeping up to date with TB testing requirements
- Tag, register, and record stock and movements, according to NAIT requirements
- Assess TB risk with any livestock movements related to grazing or purchasing cattle or deer

- Ensuring hunter aren't dumping or releasing pigs or deer on their property.

Continued farmer support will see bovine TB eradicated and the creation of a TB-free future for New Zealand.



Further information

More information on the declaration of Vector Free Areas can be found at:

ospri.co.nz