

NPCA Newsletter



National Possum
Control Agencies

We provide a forum for agencies and stakeholders involved in possum and vertebrate pest control to cooperatively address industry issues, share information, develop best practice and promote training / professional development. Any individual or organisation engaged in the vertebrate pest control industry is eligible for membership.

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The NPCA is run by a management committee of six people and a National Co-ordinator.

Management committee:

Mike Hawes (Chairperson) –
Department of Conservation

Penny Fairbrother – *Animal
Health Board*

Bill Martin – *Local Government
New Zealand*

Bronwyn Shute – *Contractor*

Martin Brenstrum – *Contractor*

John Sanson – *Ministry of
Agriculture & Forestry*

National Co-ordinator:

Maurice Kennedy

UNDER REVIEW: ALL VTA MODEL PERMIT CONDITIONS

The model permit conditions for all the vertebrate toxic agents (VTAs) that can be used only with a public health unit permit are being reviewed.

The model conditions give guidance to Medical Officers of Health and to Health Protection Officers who are warranted under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act in setting permit conditions and are also used as a reference by those in the vertebrate pest control industry who prepare permit applications.

Changes to the current model permit conditions will be recommended, if considered appropriate, after consultation with a wide spectrum of stakeholders.

“We will be speaking with central government agencies such as Ministry of Health, ERMA New Zealand, the Department of Conservation and the New Zealand Food Safety Authority,” says Alex Watt of Allen & Clarke Policy and Regulatory Specialists who are undertaking the review on behalf of the Ministry of Health.

“We will also talk to the Animal Health Board, regional councils, health protection officers, field staff and operators across the country

to ensure that we understand the practical issues and possible changes that could have a positive impact on the ground.”

A set of guidelines will also be developed, as part of the project, to guide Medical Officers of Health and Health Protection Officers on modifying model permit conditions when local circumstances require specific attention.

Alex says that NPCA members will be amongst those consulted and, while it won't be possible to meet individually with everyone, members are welcome to make comments or enquiries up until the 15th of June by email or phone.

A discussion document with the proposed new permit conditions will also be available for comment later in the year.

To make comments or enquiries contact Alex Watt before 15 June 2009 at :

Email: awatt@allenandclarke.co.nz

Phone: 04 890 7304.

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THE 2009 NPCA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

One of NPCA's strengths is that its management committee comes from a wide spectrum of backgrounds in the pest management sector, which enables it to collectively represent a range of viewpoints while working for common goals.

ISSUES THE COMMITTEE IS FACING

1080 best practice

Mike Hawes and Bill Martyn are on the steering committee responsible for developing standards, guidelines and codes of practice in the use of aerial 1080, as recommended in the 1080 Reassessment decision. The project, which will be managed by NPCA, is a large task that may take some time to complete.

NPCA role and opportunities

NPCA's role and responsibilities may be affected by potential changes in the pest control industry, such as possible funding changes, the as-yet-unknown outcomes of the current AHB Strategy Review and the MAF-led National Pest Management Strategy project (see page 5).

However, the vertebrate pest problem will still need to be dealt with and the NPCA is the only coordinating forum that is addressing industry-wide issues, such as best practice.

With this in mind, the committee will be looking at ways to better strengthen the NPCA's position, and promote awareness of its coordinating role and range of services. NPCA may also find opportunities to further develop its coordinating role and enable its members to have more input through the MAF project as it unfolds.

Information

As NPCA continues to expand its range of publications, including best practice guidelines and public information brochures (see latest, page 6), the challenge is to ensure that contractors and the public are being adequately reached with the right information presented in appropriate formats.

Mike Hawes, Chairperson



Mike lives in Nelson, where he works for the Department of Conservation as a Technical Support Supervisor in the Nelson /Marlborough Conservancy.

He originally worked for the New Zealand Forest Service, undertaking animal and vegetation surveys, and then joined DOC in 1987 where he has worked in various roles in the animal pest field. In his current role, he provides advice and support on animal pest issues to field staff, managers and others outside DOC.

John Sanson



John manages the National Co-ordination Team in the Pest Management Group of MAF Biosecurity New Zealand. The Pest Management Group provides leadership and coordination for the pest management sector, and John's team focuses on building partnerships and coordinating long-term management programmes. Examples of this include coordination of the didymo management programme, and development of regional marine biosecurity partnerships.

John has previously worked in the local government sector, including Resource Management Act implementation at a regional council, and management of district council compliance services. He also spent time working for a Borough Council in London to fund an OE trip. John has recently been appointed as the MAFBNZ representative on the New Zealand Biosecurity Institute Executive.

Martin Brenstrum



Martin owns and manages Central Districts Pest Control Ltd, the Napier-based contracting business that he started as a one-man show in 1997. Until then, he had been a school teacher for 28 years, teaching early on in rural areas where he developed an enduring interest in deer hunting. He started trapping possums in 1958 at age 12, for the bounty, and poisoned and trapped possums for their skins during the 1970s and 80s until the market collapsed in 1987.

In the late 1990s, realising that the demands of teaching had taken its toll, he was able to escape professional burnout by turning his life-long interest into a successful business. Martin co-manages CDPC with his wife Kathy and son Tim. They employ 25-26 field staff. Martin splits his own time 50/50 between office work and field work.

Bronwyn Shute



Bronwyn has just taken over as sole director of Deane Shute Contracting Ltd, following her husband Deane's death in January (see Tribute, Issue 18.)

Bronwyn first became involved in pest control through Deane, helping run their Catlins-based company, doing some monitoring work and getting out in the field. Sons Adrian and Jesse continue to carry out the field operations, which comprise mainly possum control and some ferret control – for

both DOC and AHB, all over the South Island. Bronwyn is the current Chairperson of PestNET NZ, the national body representing pest control contractors.

Bill Martyn



Bill started out working for the former mid-Southland, Marlborough, Alexandra and Kaikoura Pest Destruction Boards in a number of roles, including as a trainee and then a training officer under the Agricultural Pest Destruction Council training scheme in the mid-1980s. He was self-employed in the forestry industry for a number of years before joining Greater Wellington Regional Council in 1994 as a pest control field operator and then field supervisor.

He joined Horizons in 1997 as a pest management coordinator based in Taumarunui, and is now an Environment Manager for Horizons, which includes acting as the Biosecurity Manager and Manager of the Regional Response team.

Penny Fairbrother



Penny has been the Research Coordinator with the Animal Health Board in Wellington since 2003. She has a BSc in zoology and ecology and a post-graduate diploma in environmental health. Before joining AHB she did laboratory work at Environmental Science and Research and Wellington Hospital, worked as a Respiratory Scientist at the hospital Respiratory Department and managed various science research projects.

She currently manages the AHB research programme (worth approximately \$2.5M per annum) and participates in committees of other agencies, such as NPCA and the National Research Centre for Possum Bio-Control. Somehow, she also finds time for her two children, aged 13 years and 16 months!

NOTICE FOR ACCREDITED OPERATORS

A more regular schedule for updating the listings of accredited possum monitors has been confirmed with AgITO, which administers the unit standard achievements required for accreditation.

From now on, the listings on the NPCA website will be updated quarterly, in:

- July,
- October,
- January and
- April.

UP-COMING TRAINING COURSES – REGISTER NOW

Those interested in enrolling for field operative and designer courses this year should register now while places are still available.

The remaining 2009 courses are as follows:

Course 220 - Field Operative:

- 14th & 15th July,
- Invermay Research Centre, Mosgiel.

Course 221 – Designer:

- 25th & 26th August,
- Canterbury University, Christchurch.

Course 222 - Field Operative:

- 8th & 9th September,
- Club Habitat, Turangi.

To register: simply email your contact details to:

Europafts@xtra.co.nz

Registrations will be processed as they are received and pre-course information dispatched.

**FORTHCOMING *M. BOVIS*
5TH CONFERENCE:
25-28 AUGUST**

The Animal Health Board will be hosting the fifth international *M. bovis* Conference at Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington.

It will be an opportunity for 'Tb-free New Zealand' to showcase its programme of controlling *Mycobacterium bovis* infection in cattle and deer herds, a major part of which is through targeting infected wild animal populations.

Post-conference 4-5 day tours, beginning 31 August, are being organised for an in-depth look at the New Zealand farming sector and the work of the Animal Health Board.

For more information, or to register, visit:

www.mbovisconference.org

**POSSIBLE MERGER:
LINCOLN UNIVERSITY &
AGRESEARCH**

Implications for vertebrate pest research are as yet unknown in the possible merger of Crown Research Institute, AgResearch, and Lincoln University.

However, both organisations are currently carrying out investigations and consultation into the proposal, which is aimed at enhancing Lincoln University's educational and research focus on land use and associated environmental and social matters.

A formal recommendation to Cabinet is expected later this year.

HAMILTON 'HALO' PROJECT - GOOD NEWS FOR TUIS

Pest control is receiving good press in Hamilton where once rare tui sightings are noticeably on the increase.

Two years ago, Environment Waikato launched the 'Hamilton Halo' pest control project with the objective of boosting the city's tui population. Research had shown that only 27% of tui chicks in the bush areas close to the city were surviving so ship rats and possums - the birds' main predators - were targeted.

Knowing that tui will fly up to 20km to feed, all known tui breeding sites within a 20km-radius 'halo' around Hamilton were identified and three areas of native bush totaling 850ha selected for pest control operations.

Land owner preferences determined the control methods. Bait stations were used at two of the sites, near Cambridge. At the third site, west of Hamilton, bait stations were used on half the area and aerial 1080 on the balance to investigate the costs and benefits of the two control methods. Taking into account the 100m feeding range of rats, a total of 1300 bait stations were placed at 75m intervals across the three sites.

The project was a joint effort between Environment Waikato Biosecurity staff managing the project, Landcare Research scientists carrying out monitoring, community groups contributing to funding, and industry contractors carrying out the pest control. Kevin Christie of EcoFX Pest Control Solutions was responsible for the aerial 1080 drop and ground control on the two sites near Cambridge while Peter Nicholls of Forest & Farm Services

carried out the ground control work neighbouring the aerial site.

Monitoring showed that all the operations achieved excellent rat kill rates and Environment Waikato biosecurity officer, Ben Paris, says results so far are encouraging.

"It's too soon yet in the monitoring programme to show significant results as it will take time for the tui population to build up and spread," he says. "However, the trends are positive and we're getting plenty of anecdotal evidence from the public."

Land owners around the Halo sites have reported more vegetation growth and more fledglings, while Hamilton city residents have reported seeing tuis in their gardens for the first time ever.

Until now just a handful of tuis have come to the city for winter feeding but residents are starting to see birds more frequently and in larger groups. Last spring, one scientist spotted 20-25 tui in an area just south of the city and one couple in north Hamilton spotted seven at once on their kowhai tree, having seen no more than three at once in the preceding 40 years.

Ben says the Halo project is a medium to long-term strategy in which pest control will play an important part in restoring bird habitat to Hamilton's river and gully systems, which act as bird feeding corridors through the city.



A spring-feeding tui at the Maungakawa Reserve Halo pest control site near Cambridge. Photo courtesy David Brittain

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT LEADS TO NEW FACTORY

When Malcolm Thomas bought a second-hand pelletising machine in 2006 he had no idea he would be manufacturing Pindone baits three years later.

Malcolm simply wanted to make trial baits for testing in the course of research work for his Christchurch-based company, Pest Control Research Limited.

“It took quite a while to figure out how to use it,” Malcolm recalls. “Then, when I had it pretty well sussed, Sheryle Gregory, who runs Pest Management Services, approached me about the possibility of manufacturing Pindone baits for her and I thought, ‘Why not?’”

Sheryle’s previous supplier had closed down and she was also planning to shift her company from Waikanae to Christchurch for the cost benefits of being closer to the large South Island Pindone market. Pest Management Services holds the registration licence for Pindone baits.

Malcolm leased a 900m² factory building, installed his machine and borrowed Sheryle’s fork-lift for handling the larger quantities that would soon be produced. There were also months of negotiations with the New Zealand Food Safety Authority to comply with all the set-up and procedure requirements necessary under the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicine regulations. Approval was granted in December 2008 and production began a month later.

Five months later, Malcolm is pleased with the results though there’s been more to learn.

“The moisture content was too high to start with, but we’ve now corrected that and allow extra time for post-pelletising drying. Also, while my little trial machine has

been fine for getting started, it’s not ideal, so I’ve imported a full pelletising plant from China which I’m still setting up. I’ll then use the little one for research purposes again.”



Malcolm Thomas with the small soon-to-be replaced pelletiser.

THE FUTURE OF PEST MANAGEMENT IN NEW ZEALAND

In 2008, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) commissioned an independent ‘think piece’ on the future of pest management in New Zealand.

As the body responsible for leading and coordinating pest management nation-wide, MAF wanted to stimulate discussion on the issue, through the think piece, to help in developing a national strategy to guide pest management activity in New Zealand.

The MAF-commissioned think piece was prepared jointly by the Law and Economics Consulting Group and consultant John Hellstrom, with a cross sector steering group supported by an expert reference group.

Regional councils developed an equivalent report in parallel that consolidates regional views on how to improve New Zealand’s pest management arrangements. This report was prepared by EnFocus.

The two documents informed each other during development and are

broadly consistent. Both think piece documents were then released to stakeholders for comment and discussion.

Links to the think pieces and supporting documents can be found on the MAF Biosecurity New Zealand website at:

<http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests/surv-mgmt/mgmt>

Next steps

The two reports have identified a range of ideas for improving the effectiveness of the pest management system, but some of the suggestions require significantly more analysis than was provided. Therefore, MAF has established a project to advance findings of the two reports.

In early 2009, MAF held workshops with interested stakeholders on the findings of both reports and on the pest management system.

Over the coming months, these ideas will be examined in more detail, including:

- clarifying outcomes, roles and accountabilities across pest management organisations (including the role of the Crown as a good-neighbour landowner), and
- improving tools that enable pest management.

For more information please contact:

pestmanagementgroup@maf.govt.nz.

1080 OPEN DAYS ON THE WEST COAST

This year, the Animal Health Board is running a series of open days on the West Coast, about 1080.

The open days are in response to calls for the AHB to be more accessible and open about its activities. Information is provided about the nation-wide and West Coast Tb-free programmes through displays and hand-outs but, more importantly, through specialists from the AHB and DOC who are on hand to discuss the issues and answer questions.

The first in the series was held in Hokitika at the end of April and the second at Reefton on 13 May.

NPCA committee member and AHB Research Coordinator, Penny Fairbrother, who was there says the range of visitors included people from the farming community, local council representatives and tourists, as well as anti-1080 lobbyists.

“Interestingly, there were very few people who did not have an

opinion one way or the other; either those who are totally opposed to 1080 or those who totally support it. We hope that the open days will help allay misinformation to all parties and promote open communication.”

The open days have been planned to precede the start of the AHB 2009 vector control programme and the last of the series will take place on 4 June in Westport.



Visitors viewed information and talked to AHB and DC staff at the Hokitika 1080 open day. Photo courtesy of the Greymouth Star.

NPCA PUBLICATIONS

PUBLICATIONS ARE POPULAR

Analysis of the NPCA website usage shows that its online publications are attracting increasing numbers of downloads from the website or orders for hard copies. Currently over 300 publications are being downloaded per month, of which nearly half are from the best practice protocols and guidelines series.

NPCA Coordinator, Maurice Kennedy, is delighted.

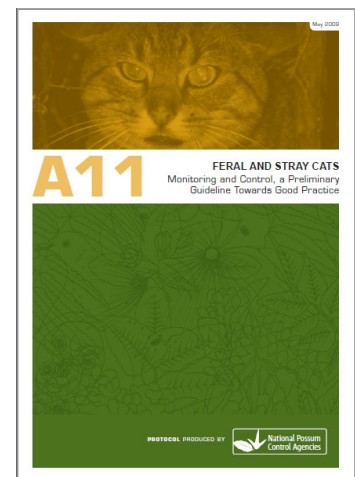
“One of NPCA’s important roles is to provide well-researched and accessible information to practitioners and to members of the public. These usage levels reflect that our online presence is helping to achieve that and to promote good practice in vertebrate pest control through Internet searches.”

FERAL AND STRAY CATS GUIDELINE

NPCA latest publication, *Feral and Stray Cats, Monitoring and Control* is now complete.

It was researched and written for NPCA by Shaun Ogilvie of the Bio-Protection and Ecology Division at Lincoln University and is a preliminary guideline towards good practice. It will be subject to periodic review (as are all NPCA publications) and updated in response to new research findings as they become available and in response to feedback.

A feedback form is now included at the back of all NPCA’s best practice publications as a means of adding to knowledge through readers’ own practical knowledge and experience.



Download from the publications section of www.npca.org.nz or order a hard copy from NPCA by emailing npca@xtra.co.nz, quoting publication Code A11.