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 – *MAF*

National Co-ordinator:

Maurice Kennedy

NPCA CONFERENCE 2009 - 'THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW'

REGISTER NOW

25 – 26 November
Brentwood Hotel
Kilbirnie, Wellington

This year, there's considerable focus on matters of interest to contractors and field practitioners, such as new developments in products and techniques and the opportunities arising from changes in the way pest control, overall, will be managed in the future.

Take this opportunity to exchange information and talk to people in all aspects of the vertebrate pest control industry, including:

- *Practitioners* bringing their applied experience from the field;
- *Scientists* undertaking research to improve pest control knowledge and technologies;
- *Manufacturers* of pest control products.

POSSUM POPULATION COMPETITION: Bruce Warburton will be revealing the latest estimate of New Zealand's possum population. Guesses will be taken beforehand and a prize awarded for the closest guess.

See page 2 for outline conference programme.

Register online and check for programme updates at:

www.npca.org.nz

NPCA'S AGM: GUEST SPEAKER OF VITAL INTEREST TO INDUSTRY

TIME: 2 pm, Tuesday 24 November

VENUE: Tawa Room
Brentwood Hotel
Kilbirnie
Wellington

***Guest Speaker:* "A New Approach to Pest Management"**
A representative from MAF Bio-security NZ will outline current progress with the MAF-initiated review of vertebrate pest control and what it will mean in the future for agencies, contractors and practitioners.

Any individual or organisation engaged in the vertebrate pest control industry is eligible for NPCA membership. Have a say in NPCA activities, contribute to the industry's development and keep up to date through our publication, training and information services.

To become a member visit our website: www.npca.org.nz

National Possum Control Agencies, PO Box 11461, Wellington 6142.
Tel (04) 499 7559, Fax (04) 473 1603, Email: npca@xtra.co.nz, Website: www.npca.org.nz

REGISTER NOW – NPCA VERTEBRATE PEST CONTROL CONFERENCE
'THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW'

This year's conference programme covers important issues for the vertebrate pest control industry and new developments in research and field practice. The four main themes are outlined below. You can find more detail at www.npca.org.nz .

WEDNESDAY 25 NOVEMBER

SYMPOSIUM 1:

POSSUM CONTROL STRATEGIES REPORT– AHB MANAGEMENT

National perspective
An overview on the changes that are being made to vector control as the bovine Tb rates in farmed cattle and deer herds continue to decline.

- Nick Hancox from the Animal Health Board will speak about AHB's strategy to maintain low possum densities. (See below for more about the strategy review.)

Regional perspective
Regional council initiatives to control possum populations as AHB control programmes shift their focus to higher priority areas. What are the changes in emphasis, what do they mean for contractors and pest control practitioners and where are the new future opportunities?

- Speakers from Horizons, Hawke's Bay, Waikato, Wellington and Taranaki regional councils will examine the kind of possum control outcomes that will be sought from now on with reference to past and recent possum control programmes.

SYMPOSIUM TWO:

EFFECTIVE POSSUM CONTROL

An update on initiatives that have been put in place since the reassessment of 1080. Agencies have been proactive in ensuring that, where necessary, further research is undertaken and public concerns are addressed as part of operational planning.

- Speakers from AHB, DOC, Landcare Research and NIWA.

SYMPOSIUM THREE:

OTHER PEST SPECIES CONTROL

Papers on new technologies and practices for controlling vertebrate pests other than possums.

- Speakers will present findings from research and field practice on trapping and toxins.

POSTER SESSION / TRADE PRESENTATIONS

An opportunity for researchers and conference participants to interact and exchange ideas on current research outcomes.

THURSDAY 27 NOVEMBER

SYMPOSIUM FOUR:

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN VERTEBRATE PEST CONROL

A range of new developments, including improved use of existing control tools, new toxins, baiting practices to minimise non-targets and tools that assist with better pest control results.

- Topics covered include control programme effectiveness, camera trapping, new product registrations, cost-effectiveness, animal behaviour and 1080-related research.

Keep checking www.npca.org.nz for programme updates. And don't forget to register! Registration forms can be uploaded from our website and either posted or emailed.

REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS PEST MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Animal Health Board is reviewing the National Bovine Tuberculosis Pest Management Strategy and is proposing various amendments.

Key proposed changes of particular interest to the vertebrate pest control industry include:

- Extending the strategy's duration by twelve years by changing its year of expiry from 2013 to 2025.
- Adding a new objective to reduce the size of areas where wild animal populations are infected with bovine tuberculosis.
- Adding a new objective to test the feasibility of eradicating bovine tuberculosis from wild animal populations across a range of different terrain.
- Setting a new target rate of infected herds from below 0.2% to below 0.4%.

A formal proposal explaining the amendments and the reasons for them has been released and is available on www.tbfree.org.nz. Alternatively, hard copies can be requested by phoning AHB on 0800 482 4636.

Submissions are invited and the closing date is 30 November 2009.

VTA MODEL PERMIT CONDITIONS – DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

NPCA welcomes the review of model permit conditions for vertebrate toxic agents but has concerns about some aspects of the proposed changes.

A discussion document, *Model Permit Conditions for Vertebrate Toxic Agents and Guidelines for their Modification,* was put out for comment in mid-2009. The NPCA management committee met with Alex Watt of Allen & Clarke Policy and Regulatory Specialists Ltd ,the company undertaking the review for the Ministry of Health.

NPCA Chairperson, Mike Hawes, says the review is needed.

"We've had the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act, the ERMA review, new water research and heaps of water monitoring since the model permit conditions were first revised in 1999. Ad hoc local interpretation has led to inconsistency around the country and some divergence from the primary focus of public health. So a complete review and the provision of guidelines is a positive move."

Mike says the proposed conditions include positive features such as updated water monitoring requirements and defined distances for exclusion zones around water uptakes.

However, the committee did have some concerns and the main points are set out below.

Approval period (condition 5)

- The exclusion of multi-year permits will add unnecessarily to work loads for repeat operations over successive years.

Risk ranking for 1080

- The new risk assessment and analysis guideline (p. 28 of the discussion document) has ranked 1080 and cyanide equally and this is misleading as cyanide is immediately toxic to humans, whereas 1080 acts more slowly, and there have been recorded deaths in New Zealand from cyanide but not from 1080. The committee suggested that the rather coarse 3-level ranking system be amended to a more finely-tuned 5-levels.

Exclusion zones around schools (condition 14)

- This condition provides for the exclusion of a VTA being applied within "a mutually agreed distance" from schools and early childhood centres. Greater clarity is needed to better define the risk that would be mitigated, rather than simply defining distances, and to explain who would be involved in the 'mutual agreement'.

Exclusion zones near facilities, tracks and roads (conditions 10-12)

- The guidelines for setting exclusion distances from facilities, tracks and roads appear to be based on somewhat inconsistent reasoning in regards to the visibility of baits and the number of people potentially exposed.

Track clearing (condition 16)

- Some flexibility is needed as to the necessity for and the timing of the requirement to check and clear tracks of baits within 24 hours of an aerial VTA application, in regard to very low-use tracks such as those in the back country.

Dust inhalation (condition 32)

- The requirement to take all reasonable efforts to ensure that dust does not spread beyond an VTA loading or processing operational area in hazardous or objectionable quantities is poorly defined and unnecessary because it is covered by the HSNO Act.

Signage to advise injury risk (condition 33)

- The requirement to erect signs before an aerial VTA operation, warning of the risk of injury from flying baits, would require a disproportionate amount of time and cost compared to the low risk involved.

Submissions on the discussion document closed in mid-September. A final document is likely to be released by the Ministry of Health in mid-late November.

If you wish to comment or provide feedback, please contact NPCA at npca@xtra.co.nz or ph. (04) 499 7559.

KEY POINTS ABOUT THE MODEL PERMIT CONDITIONS REVIEW

The Model Permit Conditions review was commissioned to:

- Review the current Model Permit Conditions for the use of VTAs;
- Develop new Model Permit Conditions and/or amend the existing conditions; and
- Develop guidelines for officers to use when varying the Model Permit Conditions.

The discussion document covers VTAs for which operators must have a permit from public health units; i.e:

- Sodium fluoroacetate (1080)
- Sodium cyanide
- Potassium cyanide
- Phosphorous
- 3-chloro-p-toluidine-hydrochloride (DRC 1339).

Poisons used for pest control but which do not require a permit (e.g. pindone, brodifacoum) are not covered by the Model Permit Conditions and are not covered by the review.

1080 AERIAL PEST CONTROL COMPLIANCE GUIDELINES

Diederik Meenken of Biodiverse Limited has been appointed to develop the proposed aerial 1080 best practice guideline that was announced in the last issue of the NPCA newsletter.

Diederik has some 15 years' experience in vertebrate pest control including research and field work. In recent years he has authored and reviewed a range of best practice guidelines, protocols and standard operating procedures; advised on biodiversity management; and contributed to the industry's training programmes.

The aerial 1080 project is underway and Diederik is working with the Steering Committee to establish the guiding principles and overall structure of the guideline.

Diederik says successful completion of the guideline will rely on industry agreement and contribution. He will be actively consulting with stakeholders throughout the project

"I'm inviting industry participants to contact me to contribute their ideas, raise any issues that are important to them, or comment on drafts as they come out."

The project, which is limited to aerial 1080 operations only, is due for completion in mid-2010.

To contact Diederik, email: meenken@wise.net.nz

'REMARKABLE CHANGES' – NETS2009 CONFERENCE

Registrations are still being taken for the New Zealand Biosecurity Institute's annual conference:

14-16 October 2009,

Queenstown

The theme for NETS2009 is 'Remarkable Changes,' in recognition of both Queenstown's remarkable location and that the annual seminar was last held there 30 years ago. The event will take a retrospective look at pest management, as well as discuss what biosecurity issues we may face over the coming 30 years.

The conference will feature biosecurity issues relevant to the southern South Island such as rabbits, didymo, wilding trees and pest eradications from islands. There will also be papers on topics relevant to current biosecurity and pest management.

The use of posters at the conference is strongly promoted to enable a wider range of topics to be presented and provide opportunities for greater informal discussion and exchange of information over the three days.

To find out more and register, visit:

http://www.biosecurity.org.nz/ or phone: 0274887102.

M BOVIS CONFERENCE - TUBERCULOSIS CONTROL TRENDS AROUND THE WORLD

Over 200 delegates from around the world heard about the latest in bovine tuberculosis research and control management at the highly successful *M. bovis* conference in Wellington from 25-28 August.

Of particular interest were the comparisons that could be made between bovine Tb programmes in different countries.

In many developing countries where farming is being set up, for instance, there are inadequate resources for more than localised control of Tb, which is being introduced as infected cows are brought in.

In some countries, the infection of native and/or culturally important species, such as lions in South Africa, makes control more complicated.

As one New Zealand delegate observed, "We are very lucky in New Zealand that our wildlife maintenance host is not a native icon or sacred idol."

In the United States and European countries, the disease has been all but eradicated under advanced control programmes. Yet, Tb is still present in wildlife populations in these countries and the challenge is how to prevent it spreading back into livestock populations.

Overall, New Zealand's progress compared favourably with most other countries. The partnership that exists here between farmers, government and AHB was noted as a particularly important key to the successful implementation of our Tb control programme.

A BALANCED LOOK AT 1080

If you haven't already seen it, take a look at the excellent article on the issues surrounding 1080 in *New Zealand Geographic*, Issue No. 97, May-June 2009.

The article, by Dave Hansford, is simply entitled '*1080'*. It takes a balanced look at the various perspectives on the use of 1080 in New Zealand and is well worth making available to people who wish to find out more about the subject.

To order a copy visit: http://www.nzgeographic.co.nz/articles.php?ID=285

KERERU POPULATIONS ON THE INCREASE

In a significant conservation turn-around, our native pigeon, the kereru, is now classified as a 'non-threatened' species – almost certainly thanks to concerted vertebrate pest control programmes around the country.

THREAT STATUS RE-EVALUATED

In 2002 and 2005, the kereru was classified as in gradual decline under the Department of Conservation's threat classification system. That meant that the population was of more than 5000 mature individuals and was predicted to decline by at least 5% in the following 10 years due to existing threats.

Then, between January and June 2008, the threat status of New Zealand birds was comprehensively re-evaluated. The kereru population was found to meet the threshold for non-threatened status - it numbered more than 20,000 mature individuals and was stable or increasing.

Surveys carried out for the Ornithological Society of New Zealand's 2007 atlas of bird distribution also showed significant improvement in kereru populations. Surveys carried out between 1999 and 2004 showed that kereru distribution had improved by 26% during the 20-year period since the previous survey period between 1969 and 1979.

The increase is largely attributed to the many predator control programmes that the Department of Conservation, Animal Health Board, regional and city councils, private landowners and voluntary community groups have implemented through the country.

(References: *Notornis, 2008, Vol. 55: 117-135,* 0029-4470 © The Ornithological Society of New Zealand, Inc. and *Kereru News* No. 65 (9 July 2008), NZ Wildlife Management Forum)

Spring feast: kereru feed on succulent new poplar leaves at Kaitoke Regional Park, September 2007. Photo courtesy Greater Wellington

KERERU COUNTS AT KAITOKE

Each spring kereru come to feed in an area around the ranger's residence at Kaitoke Regional Park, attracted by the succulent new leaves on tree lucerne, broom, ribbonwood, poplars, willows and kowhai.

Since 2003, staff from Greater Wellington have conducted counts each spring by walking slowly along a transect and counting the kereru evident within a fixed area of approximately 500 square metres around the ranger's house. The results shown in the table below show a dramatic increase in numbers over the 6-year period to 2008. (The 2009 results are not yet available.)

Annual Spring Kereru Counts Kaitoke Regional Park

Year	Mean	No. of counts	Range
2003	29.2	5	14-36
2004	54.6	5	44-73
2005	57.5	4	29-77
2006	77.8	5	72-82
2007	84.2	5	51-109
2008	142.2	5	102-168

Greater Wellington carried out possum control in nearby forested areas of the Hutt River catchment in 2002, 2003, 2005 and 2007 using aerial 1080 drops. It seems likely that the increasing numbers of kereru recorded at the spring counts can be attributed to the control programme.