

NPCA Newsletter



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NPCA provides 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.

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

Management committee:

Bill Martin, (Chairperson), *Local Government New Zealand*

Mike Hawes, *Department of Conservation*

Brent Rohloff, *Animal Health Board*

Clyde Holden, *Contractor*

Martin Brenstrum, *Contractor*

Sherman Smith, *MAF*

National Coordinator: Maurice Kennedy

FROM BILL MARTYN, NPCA CHAIRPERSON

MILESTONES AND NEW INITIATIVES

Since our last newsletter in October 2010, NPCA has been busy, seeing a number of projects through to fruition and starting new initiatives on behalf of our industry.

After two years of hard slog the aerial 1080 industry guidelines are complete: - an important industry standard that is a major milestone for us all. We now have a tool that outlines, in one document, the risk management factors and obligations for pest managers and operators using aerial 1080 in New Zealand. The guidelines are already being utilised to assist in developing and updating agency standard operating procedures (SOPs) for aerial 1080 work.



The guidelines project was about gathering and clearly setting out the information that aerial 1080 users need to know about their responsibilities under the various relevant laws and regulations. Gaining consensus between the agencies on how these should be interpreted and illustrated was no easy task at times. Acknowledgement must be given to Diederik Meenken of Biodiverse Limited for his never-ending patience and skill in working through the issues.

Publications continue to be an ongoing area of endeavour for NPCA. As well as the aerial 1080 guideline, some updated and/or new titles have been added to the publication list; see page 8 for details.

The workshops at the 2010 NPCA conference were well received and comments indicated they were an effective means of enabling participation. We heard what several of you told us about ensuring to follow up on the workshops so that the effort is not wasted and that tangible returns are realised for the participants and for practitioners. See page 2 for an update on the various initiatives now being taken to follow up on the workshops.

I would like to thank our four workshop chair people: Bruce Warburton (Landcare Research), Phil Cowan (Landcare Research), Doug Lush (MAF) and Sherman Smith (MAF) for doing such a great job of running the workshops and reporting back some very important industry requests.

By the time of our next newsletter I should be reporting to you for the first time on behalf of the newly formed National Pest Control Agencies Inc. As approved at the 2010 AGM, we have moved to register NPCA as an incorporated society, including the subtle name change that better reflects our industry's scope of interest in all vertebrate pest management in New Zealand.

Cheers, Bill

CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS – OUTCOMES AND INITIATIVES

The workshops held at the 2010 conference proved an effective forum for exchanging information and knowledge, and discussing specific issues. A range of issues and industry needs were identified and NPCA is following up on these, as briefly summarised below.

Population monitoring

The population monitoring best practice guidelines are to be reviewed in response not only to the workshop discussions but also to feedback NPCA has received from individual contractors and from a recent meeting with PestNet.

The monitoring guidelines were one of the first NPCA publications, developed over more than a year in readiness for the first pilot training course in September 1996. The guidelines have been reviewed on average every two years since, to keep pace with the rapid development of monitoring methodology and the need to make it more specific for contract management purposes. The call for a more comprehensive review reflects the level of ongoing change in our industry. NPCA will be co-ordinating the review and will publish the updated guidelines in due course.

The review will focus on the technical elements of best practice as distinct from matters of contract management, which will not be within its scope.

Blasted rabbits

The outcomes on rabbits are largely being progressed under the umbrella of the rabbit coordination group (RCG). See page 4 for a detailed update on various initiatives being undertaken .

Regulatory requirements for the pest control industry

This workshop generated no follow-up work but served as a very useful information and discussion session for all participants about the effects of various regulatory developments on pest control operations

Rooks

The Rook workshop generated a lot of potential research projects, some quite large and requiring considerable resources to complete. To begin the process, Horizons Regional Council has secured an Envirolink Grant that will allow Phil Cowan of Landcare Research to scope out project parameters and prioritise the order and scale of work. Phil will be in touch with many of you soon.

PAPP - IT'S REGISTERED!

PAPP (para-aminopropiophenone), a new toxin for controlling stoats and feral cats, has been registered for use in New Zealand.

It's registration is the culmination of more than a decade's collaborative work and an investment of around \$1,000,000 by the Department of Conservation and its commercial partner Connovation Ltd. Their work built upon research undertaken in Australia during the 1990s and has included collaboration with Landcare Research, Lincoln University and the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre of Australia.

As PAPP does not affect possums and rats, it is not an

alternative to 1080 but it adds to the control tools available against stoats and feral cats. It works quickly, inducing unconsciousness in stoats within about 15 minutes and death soon after. An antidote reduces the risk to non-target species.

The ERMA approval allows the use of PAPP in two forms of paste and as a ready-to-use bait, which Connovation will be manufacturing in due course. All three products can be used only in bait stations and only approved handlers will be able to use PAPP. Training of the approved use certifiers has already begun in preparation for approved handler applications.



PAPP adds to the tools available for controlling stoats and feral cats. Photo (right) Crown copyright, courtesy Department of Conservation

DEER REPELLENT USEFUL TOOL FOR AERIAL OPERATIONS

Ten years on from its first trials, Epro Deer Repellent (EDR) is proving a useful tool to reduce deer by-kill from aerial 1080 drops in areas where recreational hunting is a valued activity.

Brent Rohloff, AHB Programme Manager for the Southern South Island and AHB's representative on the NPCA management committee, says that while AHB doesn't target deer to meet its disease control objectives it may consider using repellent in certain circumstances.

"We recognise that deer are an important recreational hunting resource in certain areas. Where aerial 1080 pest control is seen as a threat to that resource, it may help to resolve conflict and alleviate concerns amongst hunters."

Situations where repellent has enabled aerial 1080 baiting with minimal impact on deer include Crown-owned Recreational Hunting Areas and Māori land where income is derived from deer hunting. However, using deer repellent can increase the cost of an aerial operation by around 30 per cent.



Deer, Whirinaki Forest Park, 2010. Photo: by Kohu Kohiti, courtesy of DOC, Crown copyright

EDR was developed after EPRO commissioned Landcare Research to identify and test a deer repellent. AHB subsequently funded the field trials that began in 2001.

Grant Morriss, vertebrate ecologist with Landcare Research, says the findings between 2001 and 2007 indicated that EDR reduced deer mortality and did not affect the target possum kill.

These findings were further reinforced in 2008, when the by-kill effects of an aerial 1080 operation using EDR carried out in the Blue Mountains Recreational Hunting Area in Otago were compared with that of a similar operation carried out in 2001 without repellent. The comparison showed a significant reduction in the mortality of fallow deer from an estimated 66% to 10% of the population.

Owen Harris, AHB Vector Control Co-ordinator with the Hawke's Bay Regional Council, was involved from the outset of the research in setting up trial areas in his area. One of the areas was the Māori-owned Tatarakina block, much used for hunting.

"We'd been using 1080 there and the hunters weren't too happy," Owen says. "We involved them in the before and after monitoring of deer kill when trialling the repellent and the results gave them and the council confidence. We have little opposition in the region now."

Owen says a downside is the cost which, at \$8 - \$9 / ha currently, adds significantly to the overall operational cost. This means that its use must be carefully considered on a case by case basis.

EDR was first registered for use on carrot bait in 2006 and subsequently also approved for use on cereal baits in 2009.

Meanwhile, research is ongoing. The effects of EDR on the kill rate of other pest species such as rats is being investigated, as well as the effects on the mortality of other non-target animals such as birds.

Further reading: 'Special Edition on 1080, Reduce. Refine. Replace', *Kararehe Kino*, *Vertebrate Pest Research* Issue 14 / June 2009

DOC HUNTING PERMITS NOW ONLINE

A new online National Hunting Permit System enables hunters to apply for DOC permits and check on hunting information updates from any location.

The new system also allows single permits to be issued for multiple areas around the country, bringing about a more consistent approach between conservancies.

Permits are emailed to applicants with updates on track closures and other information about the area that might affect hunting. Permits are valid for four months and a current firearms licence is required, together with the permit, to hunt on public conservation lands.

The online system is at: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/hunting/permits-and-licences/hunting-permit/>

WHAT'S HAPPENING ABOUT RABBITS?

An action plan has been developed and its implementation begun to address worrying increases in rabbit numbers in recent years.

THE PROBLEM

Rabbit populations reduced substantially after the illegal introduction of rabbit haemorrhagic disease (RHD) virus in 1997. It was a boon for land managers in rabbit-prone areas, but a short-lived one, as Jeff Donaldson group manager of regional service at the Otago Regional Council reflects.

“The virus was the best thing that happened in the rabbit problem, but the numbers have built up again and are back to pre-virus days,” he says. “The main problem areas are still the traditional ones of Central Otago, the Canterbury high country and parts of inland Marlborough and these are the areas where the most work is going on.”

In response to the re-emerging problem the Rabbit Coordination Group (RCG) was set up in 2007, representing stakeholders and agencies including affected regional councils, DOC, LINZ, Federated Farmers, Landcare Research, NPCA and MAF.

Meanwhile, Federated Farmers approached central government about its concerns that the rabbit situation had got out of hand. In 2009 MAF Biosecurity New Zealand commissioned a report, *The Current State of Rabbit Management in New Zealand* by Roger Lough.

The report pulled together information from agencies and farmers and made recommendations for the future. This gave a steer to the RCG as to areas where improvement was needed and, in 2010, the RCG developed an action plan, which it has already started to implement.



UPDATE ON RABBIT MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Best practice information

Updates needed to keep abreast of legislative changes, knowledge about the RDH virus and rabbit control techniques are being implemented through consultation with key parties.

Pest Rabbits Monitoring and Control Good Practice Guidelines

An updated edition has just been published under NPCA publication Code A5.

NPCA Co-ordinator, Maurice Kennedy, says this was a significant milestone in co-operation and achieving consistent approaches around the country as it is the first time that a single best practice has been agreed by all councils rather than councils maintaining their own separate approaches.

1080 Aerial Control of Possums and Rabbits: Standard Operating Procedures for Regional Government

A standard operating procedure (SOP) for regional government is currently being finalised and should be published by mid-year under NPCA publication code A14.

Training, development and skills retention

There has been concern that the required skills base for rabbit management has not been maintained, resulting in a looming skills shortage as well as possible inconsistent monitoring methodologies.

NPCA has set up a working party to develop an accredited operator system for rabbit population monitoring, as a means of providing quality assurance for managers.

The first step is a training needs analysis workshop being held with technical experts at Lincoln University in mid-May. The purpose is to confirm the training needs for practitioners and landowners undertaking rabbit control and to agree on standards.

A process to enable entry accreditation will be planned and implemented first, and it is then envisaged that unit standards will eventually be developed at a later stage.

NPCA is co-ordinating this training initiative and it is envisaged that it will publish regularly updated lists of the accredited rabbit operators on the NPCA website, as it currently does with the possum population monitoring accreditation scheme.

The RCG, which meets three or four times a year, will be progressively addressing other actions identified in

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its action plan. These include:

- support for collective action,
- better communication of best practice and other information, and
- better understanding of and research into the use of appropriate rabbit control tools.

To see the RCG *Plan of Action for Rabbit Management* go to:

<http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/files/pests/rabbit/plan-of-action-to-improve-rabbit-management.pdf>

Rabbit-prone country, Central Otago



The Otago Regional Council is the only council with its own operational arm. The fifteen staff as well as contractors undertake the rabbit control work. Jeff Donaldson, manager of regional services, says the window of opportunity is very short in Otago: about 8-9 weeks from the last week of June to get the rabbits onto the baits and have the areas clear again in time for lambing. Climate, of course, is an unpredictable factor. This year, there's been so much grass growth that unless there are heavy frosts early enough to inhibit growth, there will be too much food to tempt the rabbits onto the baits.

Rabbit-prone country, inland Marlborough

Rabbits are a big worry for Jim Ward, Manager and lessee of the 180,787 ha Crown-owned Molesworth Station in inland Marlborough

Jim is the Vice Chair of the High Country Division of Federated Farmers and represents high country and farming interests on the Rabbit Co-ordination Group. He was one of those who lobbied the government for action.

"The RHD virus gave us a period of 10 years when no poisoning was necessary and that represents huge cost savings. For instance, one of the last operations we carried out before the virus, was in 1996. We used 700 tons of bait and it cost \$80,000. That's money that has, in the interim, been available for weed control."

Jim is concerned that virus resistance has built up in the rabbit population and believes that if nothing is done now, the cost in 5 years' time will be huge.

"We were looking for a 50/50 split between government and farmers on the basis that rabbit control needs to be undertaken on a geographic area basis rather than piecemeal landowner basis. At Molesworth, for instance, we're poisoning land that is never grazed but there's been no agreement and now, of course, in hard economic times, there's no spare cash."

Jim shares the RCG's concern about training and skills.

"There's a different skill set required for rabbit control. Rabbits are quite smart and seem to have the ability to pass knowledge down through generations. We've just had a rabbiter with 40 years' experience retire. We were fortunate to replace him with someone capable but there is a shortage."



The Clarence Valley, inland of Molesworth Station: part of the rabbit-prone area. Photo: Herb Christophers, DOC

FROM RABBITING TO BIODIVERSITY IN 50 YEARS

Last December, Ray Clarey, celebrated fifty years in the pest control industry. In a career that has brought him to his current position of Senior Biosecurity Officer (Animals) at Greater Wellington Regional Council, he has worked in various parts of the country and witnessed many changes in both the practical side of pest control and in the agencies involved.

Career

It all started in December 1960. Ray got a school holiday job with the Meringa Rabbit Board in Taumarunui, laying 1080 and phosphorous cereal baits, which he later helped to make at the board's poison factory. He stayed on, and by the time he was 21, was responsible for several staff and his own area. Within a few years he was second in charge of an amalgamated rabbit board with an area that extended from inland Taranaki to Lake Taupo and included a large portion of the Tongariro National Park. Work focused particularly on the then heavily rabbit infested areas of the pumice country near Turangi, western Lake Taupo and Taumarunui.

Ray then moved through several senior positions with the Patea–Waitotara Pest Destruction Board located north of Wanganui and the Amuri Pest Destruction Board in North Canterbury. The Amuri area was large, resulting from the amalgamation of seven former board areas that extended from the east coast to the main divide. Rabbits were the main pest problem but, in 1976, some of New Zealand's first large-scale possum poisoning operations took place in the Hammer Springs and Waiiau parts of the area, in the fight against bovine TB.

Ray's next appointment was in 1978 as Supervisor of

the Wairarapa Pest Destruction Board (PDB). The Board was particularly concerned with bovine Tb possum control. Large-scale possum poisoning took place for a period that Ray recalls was fraught with both political and technical difficulty.

Further organisational changes followed. The Wairarapa and Southern Hawke's PDBs amalgamated in 1987 to become the South East Coast (North Island) PDB and in 1989 the Wellington Regional Council took over pest control responsibilities through the national local authority reorganisation. Ray maintained his supervisory role, heading the Bovine Tb Operational Unit and tasks associated with the AHB Management Agency.

Then, in 2002 his duties broadened to focus on the outcomes of improving biodiversity in the Wellington Region under the Greater Wellington Regional Pest Management Strategy. Ray says the challenges in his new role are more diverse but there's more personal satisfaction.

"I have more direct engagement with a wider community now and there is a national groundswell towards supporting biodiversity and optimising ecological health. I'm pleased to be part of it."

Affiliated activities

Ray has mentored staff and contributed significantly to industry training throughout his career, managing training programmes in the various pest boards where he worked, and writing or assisting with the preparation of training material for subsequent training organisations, and contributing to the AHB protocol on Bovine Tuberculosis Possum Control Operations, 1992.

From 2004 and 2007, Ray served as the local government representative on the NPCA Management Committee, and continues to contribute to NPCA projects from time to time, adding his broad knowledge of industry requirements to NPCA's national overview perspective.

Ray is now working a four-day week but is as busy as ever, compiling historic archives about New Zealand's pest management for the Biosecurity Institute.

"Maybe I'll write a book one day," Ray muses. "A couple of titles spring to mind: 'Never been a Manager' or, perhaps 'Proud to have been a Rabbitter'."



Ray Clarey, circa 1965 : the early days at the Meringa Rabbit Board.

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Aerial 1080 before the 'copters

When Ray Clarey joined the Wairarapa Pest Destruction Board in 1978 aerial sowing of 1080-coated carrot was done with fixed-wing crop-dusting planes—a complicated business. The carrots were grown on contract in Ohakune or Hawke's Bay, with the harvest timed for the planned operation. They were then trucked to the Wairarapa and put through a washer, cutter and screener and coated with poison next to the airstrip where the operation was based. If rain made flying or landing conditions too dangerous, the carrots

would rot in 20 tonne heaps while waiting for conditions to improve.

The advent of helicopters and cereal baits that didn't rot was welcomed. Ray was involved in trialling bucket spreaders, tinkering with rates of bait per hectare to get the most efficient knock-down with least waste, and ensuring that the bait was always top quality.



Left to right: James Graham, Dave Halliday and Ray Clarey. Ray continues to mentor what he calls "the young guns" on his team, encouraging their training and career development. Here, they have just de-togged from their protective gear after an aerial operation in the Hutt River catchment—perfect conditions following a massive frost.

CANADA GEESE PROTECTION STATUS CHANGED

Canada geese are no longer to be managed as a game bird, allowing farmers and other land managers to cull geese populations without requiring a permit to do so. Currently, the geese are managed by Fish and Game as a hunting resource.

The change of protection status reflects increased risk to aviation safety and nuisance to farmers as geese populations continue to increase.

Canada geese will be removed from Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Act 1953 and listed in Schedule 5.

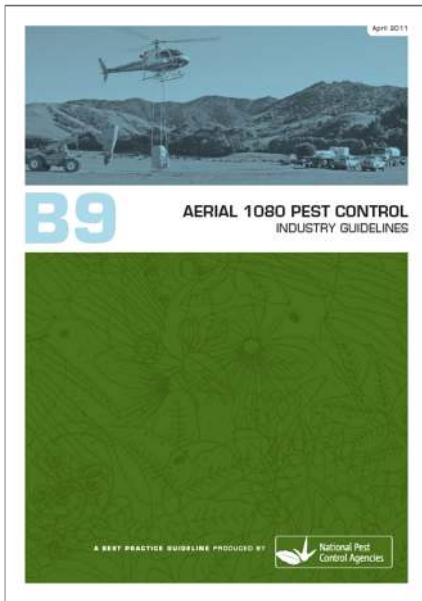


RECENT PUBLICATIONS

The following publications have been either updated or released as new publications since our last newsletter in October. All are available online or can be ordered in printed format from NPCA at www.npca.org.nz.

NEW PUBLICATION

Aerial 1080 Pest Control Industry Guidelines (Code B9)

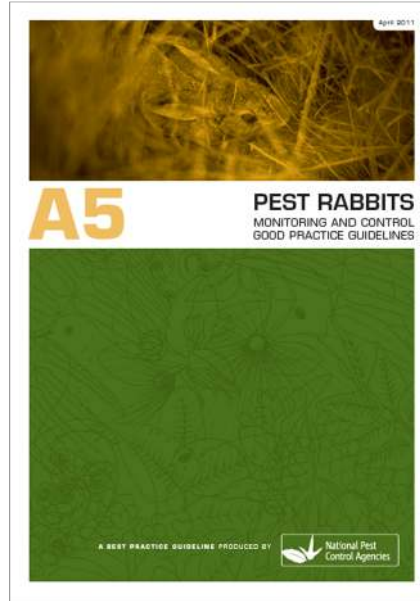


This guide is to assist those who plan and manage aerial 1080 operations to understand and manage the critical risks in undertaking aerial 1080 operations and ensure regulatory compliance.

50-page A4 black and white book

UPDATED EDITION

Pest Rabbits: Monitoring and Control Good Practice Guidelines (Code A5)

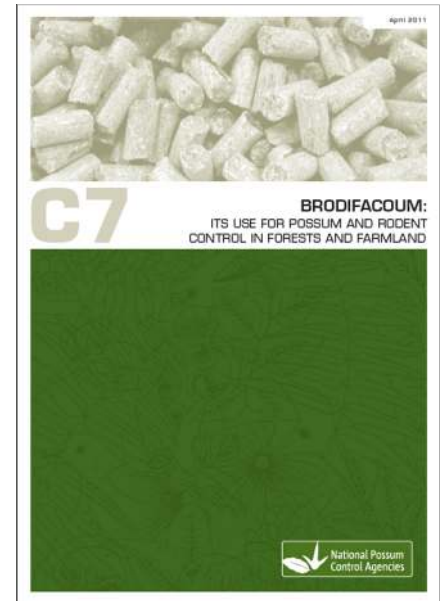


This edition has been comprehensively updated so those who have been using the earlier 2006 edition are advised to dispense with it and familiarise themselves thoroughly with the content of this 2011 edition.

50-page A4 black and white book

DUE OUT SOON

Brodifacoum: Its Use for Possum and Rodent Control in Forest and farmland (Code C7)



This new addition to NPCA's public awareness series is due out soon. It outlines brodifacoum use for possum and rodent control, including information on how it works, what it looks like, the risks to humans and animals and how to keep safe when using it.

12-page A45 colour booklet

UPDATED EDITION

Monitoring pest control industry workers for occupational exposure to 1080 (Code B6.1)

This guideline for employers was reviewed after DOC suggested changes and was finalised in liaison between DOC and the AHB.

The updates in the document are explained on the title page.

16-page A5 colour booklet



HOW TO KEEP TRACK OF NPCA PUBLICATIONS ?

A list of recent updates is available on the NPCA website. Access it either from the Home page or from the main Publications page on www.npca.org.nz