

Pest Control Operation – November 2019

The pest control operation over the central parts of Lake Taupō Forest was undertaken on 25 November 2019. The operation covered the LTFT land located between the Waitetoko Stream and the Waimarino River (see map below), and used a combination of aerial 1080 application and ground-based control.

The LTFT Trustees approved the operation in mid-2019 following a request by OSPRI received earlier in the year. Prior to approving the operation, the Trustees met with interested owners to discuss the operation, this hui held in Turangi on 9 April.

OSPRI asked to undertake the work as part of its national programme to eradicate bovine tuberculosis – a disease of cattle and deer but carried by possums. While bovine Tb is not a particular concern for the Trust, the Trustees consider that the outcome of the operation is fully consistent with its desires and obligations around protecting its native bush, its native birds, and its pine-forest areas. The Trustees are particularly concerned about the impact of 2019's "mega-mast". Mega-masts only happen every 10 years or so, and lead to unusually heavy flower and seed production of our native plants, which will inevitably lead to an explosion in the number of rats, mice, stoats, ferrets and possums. Once these pests run out of seeds to eat, they turn to our native birds, with potentially devastating effects.

The operation was undertaken by Taupō-based pest control contractor EPRO. The Trust worked closely with EPRO to ensure all necessary procedures were followed, and we are pleased that the operation was successful. The Trust insisted that deer-repellent bait be used to protect this important food resource. The operation was well signposted at all entrances to the relevant land, information about the operation is also made available when owners get their access permits. As is standard practice, owners are advised not to bring dogs into the treated area for 6 months (i.e. until 25 May 2020).

The Trustees fully realise that the use of 1080 is opposed by some of our owners, and that its use imposes an inconvenience to hunters who want to use the lands. The Trustees continue to research pest control options, and at this point are clear that the obligation to protect our taonga from the threat posed by these pests justifies the decision to approve this operation.

At the same time, we know that OSPRI has nearly achieved its objective of eradicating bovine Tb from this region, and within a few years the Trust itself will have to manage – and pay for – all pest control on its lands. With the input from a number of owners, who themselves have a range of views on pest control methods, the Trust is working to develop a strategy as to how we will address our pest control in the future, and we will bring you more information on that in 2020.

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