

## Policy Document – Aerial Toxin Operations

***The NZ Outdoors Party policy is “the immediate cessation of all aerial toxin drops”.***

Cholicalciferol, Cyanide, Brodifacoum and 1080 are all used by public and private organisations to poison mammals. The three main public users are:

- Department of Conservation who use it principally to suppress rat, stoat and to a lesser extent, possum populations.
- OSPRI who disperse it primarily to poison possums as they can transmit bovine tuberculosis.
- Regional Councils to control unwanted mammals including rabbits as well as possums and rats, on Council and privately owned land.

In addition some of these organisations, deliberately or otherwise, will use toxins to poison feral deer, goats, pigs and other game animals.

The aerial dispersal of brodifacoum and 1080 is a hugely contentious subject. Many believe without it rodents and mustelids would annihilate our bird populations, particularly the ground nesters. Others believe the impact of poisoning non-target species is under-estimated and unquantified. We know that deer are particularly susceptible to 1080 poisoning and find the cereal pellets highly palatable.

Science has since largely been replaced by propaganda in the pro- versus anti-1080 debate and whilst much research has been undertaken on 1080, it has been limited to determining toxicity, optimum dispersal rates and distribution methods. There is little, if any, research on long-term sub-lethal doses, teratogenic impact (foetal impact) or hormone interference to fauna, including humans.

Whilst rats, stoats and now possums are painted as the principal predators of birds and their eggs, no equivalent attention has been directed towards ferrets and hedgehogs. Feral cats, as highly efficient predators, are similarly not targeted as undesirable predators simply to avoid alienating large numbers of cat-lovers who support aerial toxin operations.

The NZ Outdoors Party believes, given a choice, no outdoors person would choose to have rats, stoats, ferrets, feral cats, hedgehogs and other mammals that predate on our native birds and/or their eggs. Birds have a tough enough time fending off wekas, pukeko, falcons, hawks, morepork and other native predators.

We also believe no conservationist would choose to poison any bird, insect or game animal by 1080. The loss of even a single kea by 1080 is unacceptable and there are certainly better ways of managing our valuable game herds.

Fear of the consequences of stopping aerial toxin broadcasts is the main reason people are reluctant to consider its cessation. However, the corollary to this fear is that NZ has been dropping millions of tonnes of toxins across our land for **sixty years** and yet we still have “pests” – It is not working.

In this sense 1080 is the **opium of conservation** – it commits the user to a life-sentence.

The oft quoted line from the reluctant poisoners is “we don’t like to see poisons being used but until something better comes along we have no choice” is fallacious – nothing new will come along precisely because we accept aerial toxins as a successful strategy, **despite all evidence to the contrary**.

Evidence of how 1080 is failing is available care of the Environmental Protection Agency, who, since 2008, declared that all aerial poisoning operations must be reported upon, including their effectiveness.

For 93% of the land poisoned with aerial 1080 by OSPRI since 2008, OSPRI have no data to indicate possum numbers before AND after the drop. Thus, for 2.6 million hectares of aerially poisoned public land, OSPRI have no evidence of the success, or otherwise of their possum eradication objectives, yet still they continue.

Similarly, for the majority of reported Battle of the Birds aerial 1080 drops by DoC, there is zero pre-and post-drop monitoring data to categorically support the premise that the operations eradicate rats, stoats and possums.

The NZ Outdoors Party will redirect the millions of dollars currently spent on aerial toxin operations (\$9M alone for the OSPRI aerial operations) into the following:

- research grants for target-specific alternatives,
- substantial investments in ground control operations,
- re-establishing a pest control board.

Under the current Government, DoC has allocated a paltry \$1.4M a year on alternatives. This is insufficient to drive any meaningful change.

We will work closely with the NZ Fur Council, DoC and trappers to maximise all opportunities to their contribution to possum control.

***Thus, the NZ Outdoors Party policy on 1080 is for “the immediate cessation of all aerial toxin drops”.***