

Department of Conservation Viewpoint:

DOC is responsible for managing and protecting NZs natural environment, which includes the native forests and native wildlife especially kiwi and kea etc. DOC think that using 1080 is the most efficient way of killing possums as it can kill 98% of possums with one drop. Areas where 1080 baits are used, have more kiwis surviving and this is supported by research which shows that the survival rate is 70% more. Recent research recorded that “430 kiwi have been monitored using radio tracking equipment through 1080 operations since 1990. None have ever died due to 1080 poisoning”.

1

It is also easy to use in the rugged mountain areas like Fiordland where it is safely dropped from planes, these areas would otherwise not be controlled as they are not easily accessible by hunters. This access advantage is quite significant in DOC’s decisions to continue with 1080, because leaving a large areas untreated gives possum populations a chance to spread in to treated areas... The cost of using trackers in the more difficult areas...

2

DOC has done lots of research into how 1080 effects other untargeted native species, and believe that any small effects on native wildlife are largely outweighed by the number of possums and other pests like rats and stoats that are killed. DOC confirmed that “rat tracking rates dropped to zero and remained undetectable for 5 months after a drop in the Hawdon Valley”... 1080 is also biodegradable which means it doesn’t leave residues in water, soil, plants or animals. Drinking water has been tested in drop zones [500 samples over 5 years] and traces of 1080 have never been found.

3

Recommendation

I recommend keeping the status quo, maintaining the use of 1080 poison.

Using 1080 is better than the others because it is cost effective and can be used in difficult terrain.

The Department of Conservation spends around \$2-3 million a year on dropping 1080, but other organisations also use 1080 for pest control including regional councils and farmers... The total spent nationally could be over \$15million. With the Government tightening up its spending DOC has needed to look for cost effective ways that will solve the possum population problem and 1080 is considered a fairly cheap means of possum control at \$17 per hectare for aerial drops...

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Maintaining the use of 1080 means it can control possums in places that are some distance from town and hard to access like parts of Westland and Fiordland. These areas are the home of many threatened birds like the kea and if we relied on hunting and trapping these areas would not be controlled. Thus possum numbers would continue to grow meaning damage to native forests e.g. beech forest on the West Coast, and threatened species would be lost. 1080 can be aerial dropped into such places to control possum numbers.

5

So, until a better alternative is developed that works, maintaining the use of 1080 is not only the best course of action, but better than hunting and trapping or using a bounty system. Biological controls are being researched, but these haven’t been proven.

6