

November 2026

Pest eradication on Kawau Island: possum programme

Information for landowners and residents

Auckland Council is working with Kawau Island landowners and residents on an operation to remove wallabies and possums from the island to support forest regeneration and to provide healthy habitats for native species. We have been undertaking ground-based pest control on the island since May 2025. Concentrated work on removing possums has been in progress for most of this year throughout the island and this factsheet relates to the possum programme only.

It is vital that all landowners and residents read this updated information and share it with any visitors, renters or paying guests that they are hosting on the island.

Possum programme overview

To date, the possum team have removed 143 possums through the use of indicator dogs and trapping. The operation has now transitioned from knockdown to mop-up and defence stages in many blocks. However, in the north of the island, where we are closing on the milestone of becoming possum-free, there are some specific areas where reinvasion continues. This reinvasion is through valleys creating corridors connected to prime possum habitat – where food sources are in plentiful supply.

A Feratox (encapsulated potassium cyanide) operation is planned for the northern half of the island during a suitable treatment window between 9 November and mid-December 2026.

The Feratox bait will be contained in Romark bait stations and/or Strikers, placed 1.3 metres off the ground and on properties where permission has been granted. The operation will be carried out in accordance with strict public health conditions, including observing setbacks from residential areas, tracks, roads, and water-sources with domestic intakes. Notifications of the details of the operation, including a map of the treatment areas, will take place in advance.



Feratox Striker (potato starch single-use bait station).



Romark bait stations (with a hinged lid) will contain blue cyanide pellets (inset) rolled in a non-toxic lure.

Why are we doing this?

- Possums have a significant impact on ecosystems. They can change the overall structure and composition of forests through eating large amounts of vegetation, flowers and fruits. They also compete with native species for food and habitat, and prey on lizards, insects and birds and their eggs.
- Possums are a cause of forest canopy decline, increasing the risk of erosion and fire.
- A Feratox operation in areas at risk of reinvasion will help maintain momentum in the north, where the project is nearing the milestone of becoming possum-free.

What toxins will be used in areas where possums are in high numbers?

- Feratox pellets (encapsulated potassium cyanide) will be deployed as Strikers attached to trees or in raised bait stations to target possums. A public health permit is in place for this work, with conditions specified to keep people safe.
- Toxins can be deadly to people and dogs. Visitors and residents of Kawau Island must avoid areas with toxic bait and contact with baits. Children and dogs should be supervised at all times (see below).
- Feratox is a fast-acting or acute toxin, that will be targeting possums. Dogs should be prevented from eating bait and scavenging carcasses although the risk of secondary poisoning from eating possums is low.

What you can expect from the council and its contractors

- In the planning stages of the operation, Island Conservation contacted landowners and residents to discuss the operation and complete private property permission agreements to confirm access and any conditions associated with that access.
- The agreements outlined the various control methods and the obligations of both the council and the landowner or occupier
- Prior to the deployment of toxins, Island Conservation will inform all neighbouring landowners and occupiers of the treatment area with indicative operational dates and reconfirm details of private property permission agreements. Notice will also be given to landowners directly adjoining the treatment area prior to the deployment of toxins. Landowners having their land treated will also be given notice of the non-toxic pre-feed application
- Warning signs will be placed at potential entry points to each management area where Feratox is deployed.
- Feratox will not be deployed during school holidays or public holiday weekends and will be removed during these periods if it is already in place.

- We will update our Kawau Operations web page when timings are confirmed. Visit https://conservationauckland.nz/kawau-ops-updates

How does the Feratox operational cycle work?

- The Feratox operation will be carried out in areas where high possum activity has been identified by the possum detection dog team, or is within a corridor, presenting a high risk of reinvasion. Feratox is used in line with permit conditions and monitoring results.
- The first step is the introduction of a non-toxic pre-feed to familiarise possums with the baiting tools and cereal bait as a food source. This non-toxic pre-feed is underway.
- The second step, involving the application of toxic Feratox baits as Strikers attached to trees or in bait stations, will take place from 9 November (weather permitting).
- After each Feratox treatment any uneaten Feratox bait will be removed from bait stations and buried. Where possible, carcasses encountered will be removed, although a possum that has consumed Feratox poses very little risk to dogs.

Is the operation weather-dependent?

Yes. We will be closely monitoring the weather and analysing forecasts to finalise the dates of bait application. Two to three nights of clear, stable weather at the beginning of the operation is required.

Safety precautions and water supply monitoring

To carry out this programme, Auckland Council has permission from the National Public Health Service – Northern Region who set operational conditions to safeguard human health.

Mitigation measures will be put in place for streams flowing out of the treatment area from which landowners directly draw water for drinking purposes. These will include setbacks from water extraction points for potable water. Setbacks will also exist from tracks, roads and residential areas.

Will my dog be affected by the operation?

While possums that have consumed Feratox pose little risk of secondary poisoning to dogs, dogs remain highly susceptible to Feratox poisoning if they consume the baits.

Please ensure you follow advice for keeping your dog safe during the pest control operation. **It is vital that dogs are closely supervised to ensure they do not enter the treatment area while Feratox is present.**

Please read the guidance below, visit the Conservation Auckland website, or the 'Protecting your dog' factsheet, for more information about keeping your dog safe during this operation.

Important information for dog owners

To keep your dog safe, we recommend:

- Keep dogs under supervision at all times – don't allow them to roam, especially in bush areas
- If you must walk your dog in or near the operational area, keep it on a leash, and keep it well fed and hydrated
- Don't let dogs eat Feratox bait or scavenge carcasses
- Observe council's signage and caution periods.



Important emergency information for people

In the case of suspected poisoning – dial 111 for an ambulance / rescue chopper immediately and call Poison's Centre 0800 POISON (0800 764 766) for advice while awaiting ambulance.

What happens after the operation?

A caution period will be in place for some months after the operation. This is a safety precaution set down to ensure that the public remain vigilant for as long as there is any possibility of the toxin remaining in the environment. This can take some months.

Signage will remain in place, and we will continue to keep in touch with landowners and occupiers with updates on how the operation is progressing.

Staying in touch

Keeping our residents, landowners and visitors to Kawau Island informed is important. If you have questions or want to get in touch with the project team, please phone 09 301 0101 or email kawauislandproject@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

We can also add your details to our database for this project and will send news and important information in the lead up to and during the operation.

Need help?

Visit: aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/kawau-project or conservationauckland.nz/kawau-island
Enquire: aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/contactus
Phone: 09 301 0101
Write: Auckland Council, Private Bag 92300
Victoria Street West, Auckland 1142 | DX CX 10032

Auckland Council
Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau