



**February  
2026**



# **Pest eradication on Kawau Island**

## 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. This has included the targeted use of toxins (1080 and Feratox) in areas where there are higher numbers of wallabies and possums present.

[It is important for all landowners and residents to read this updated information and to share it with any visitors, renters or paying guests that they are hosting on the island.](#)

### **Programme overview**

- The primary methods for this ground-based operation are hunting supported by the use of thermal devices and dogs, and the application of toxins (1080 and Feratox) in areas where the monitoring network has revealed higher numbers of wallabies and possums are present.
- The field camera network combined with drone survey data continues to inform our methodology. The southern sector has a much larger population of wallabies than anticipated, although the frequency and accuracy of the information from the monitoring network allows the team to adapt and refine the design. This still supports a targeted approach, with a greater emphasis on areas where they are foraging, however this has been extended across a greater coverage area due to the size and widespread distribution in the south.
- Control operations began at the southern end of Kawau Island, starting with hunting on the Kawau Island Historic Reserve and nearby private properties. The use of the thermal drone has been key to the success of the operation in block one and the area around South Cove whose populations have reduced to a few last surviving individuals. For operations updates, visit <https://www.tiakitamakimaurau.nz/get-involved/working-towards-a-pest-free-kawau-island/>
- Some limited control operations have also been underway at the northern end of the island to keep the population under control while we focus on completing the southern end.
- Toxins have been used in support of hunting in accordance with our permits and monitoring outcomes. An operation with localised use of toxins took place between 19 - 23 July 2025 in the southern half of the island, excluding residential areas and block one.
- Due to the first toxin operation being less successful than expected, this was followed by a small-scale treatment trial between 20 November - 3 December at the remote Challenger Point Peninsula. The trial was designed to evaluate foliage baiting methods for reducing wallaby populations, as well as test

assumptions on alternative food availability, wallaby behaviour, bait palatability (like introducing cut foliage with 1080 gel as a lure) and presentation.

- The findings from the trial have been reviewed by the programme technical advisory group, who have recommended a combined approach using ground-based application of 1080 cereal bait and cut-foliage treated with 1080 gel for the removal of wallabies and possums.
- Control operations, covering private land, Department of Conservation (DOC) administered land reserves and Auckland Council land reserves, are expected to conclude around the summer of 2027/28 with a further six months of ongoing monitoring.
- All of Kawau Island is involved in the pest eradication project but some areas will be excluded from toxin use. Buffer zones have been set by National Public Health Service, Northern Region, Tāmaki Makaurau/ Auckland for working in and around reservoirs, walking tracks and waterways.
- Residents and landowners will be notified when and where toxins are used.

### **What are the next steps for the operation**

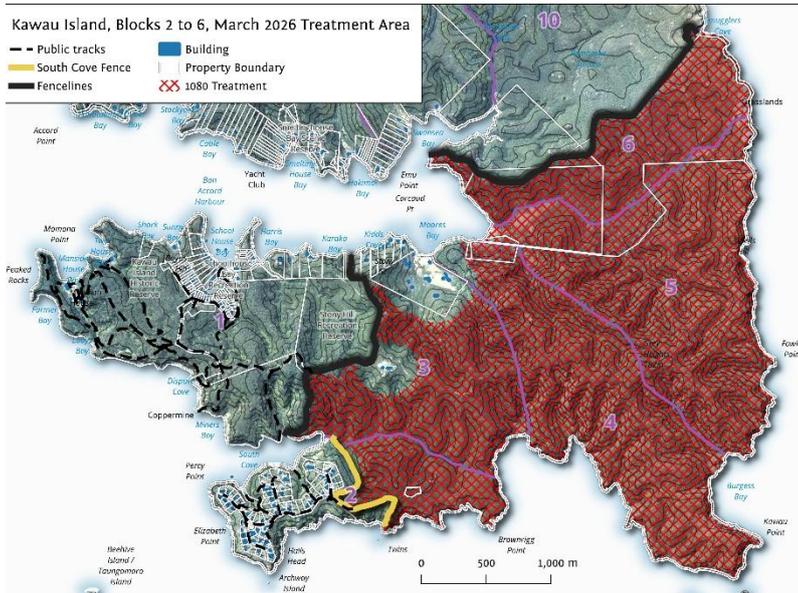
- Following the successful treatment trial consisting of 1080 gel on cut foliage at Challenger Point Peninsula last year, we are aiming to deliver a ground-based application of 1080 cereal bait and cut-foliage treated with 1080 gel in the southern sector (excluding residential areas and block one) in March 2026, weather permitting. See map of planned treatment area on the next page. The window is timed to avoid school and public holidays.
- Warning signs will be placed at potential entry points to each management area/ block and at individual sites where bait is laid.
- Toxins can be deadly to people and dogs. Small quantities of 1080 gel are lethal if swallowed. Visitors and residents of Kawau Island must stay out of areas with toxic bait and avoid contact with baits. Dogs should be supervised at all times.
- Thermal assisted hunting teams will return to remove individuals identified by monitoring via drone and our fixed camera network.
- Due to Kawau Island’s mild climate and abundant natural food sources, the treatment window is shorter, so the planned ground-based application for the northern sector will likely not occur until after the busy summer holiday season has concluded in 2027.
- We will update our web page when timings are confirmed. Visit <https://www.tiakitamakaurau.nz/get-involved/working-towards-a-pest-free-kawau-island/>



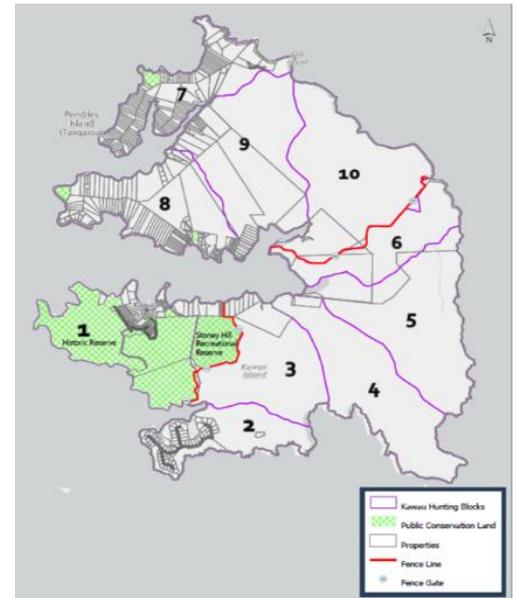
*Green/blue 1080 gel applied to Karaka foliage. Warning signs will be adjacent to each foliage bait.*



*1080 pellets (sodium fluoroacetate) are a green cereal bait, about the size of a bottle cap.*



Map of planned ground based 1080 toxin treatment area on private land.



Map of the hunting blocks on Kawau Island

## Why are we doing this?

- Kawau Island sits within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park and has many natural and cultural values. Two significant pest free islands, Tiritiri Matangi Island and Hauturu/Little Barrier Island, along with nearby Tāwharanui Regional Park, will support the natural reintroduction of indigenous species to Kawau Island.
- A large island, Kawau has an extensive canopy of native forest. It is home to threatened and at-risk indigenous species including North Island weka, kororā/little blue penguin and pāteke/brown teal, as well as many other species of shore and forest birds, including the North Island brown kiwi and kākā.

## The impact of introduced pest animals

- Wallabies damage and prevent native forest regeneration, selectively browsing on seedlings, plants and young trees. This changes the forest's composition and destroys potential habitats and food sources for native species.
- Kawau Island continues to be the only place where wallabies are located in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland. Their continued presence is a biosecurity risk to primary industry and the natural environment in mainland Auckland and Northland.
- 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.
- If these introduced pest animals are not removed, the forest will continue to decline, raising the risk of erosion and fire, and reducing sources of food and habitat for native species.

## Hunting is the primary approach

The island has been divided into 10 blocks with boundaries defined by terrain features such as gullies, roads and ridges (see map of hunting blocks above). Hunters will be assisted by thermal drone to identify the location of individual animals within each block. Dogs specially trained to detect possums and wallabies will support the operation, identifying sites of interest, helping to detect solitary individuals and confirming absence.

## What toxins will be used in support of hunting

The two toxins registered for use on wallabies are encapsulated cyanide (Feratox) and 1080 cereal pellets, gel paste applied to foliage or solution applied to carrots. Both toxins require a public health permit where conditions are specified to keep people safe.

1080 has been extensively researched, and has been found to be an effective method for eradication of

vertebrate pests. However, some people still understandably have concerns about its use. 1080 is a naturally occurring toxin found in many plants throughout the world. Plants have developed it as a natural defence against browsing mammals. It is manufactured for use in pellet baits, paste and applied to carrots for pest control operations and is toxic to mammals. This makes 1080 a valuable tool for managing introduced pests in New Zealand, as our only native mammals are bats.

1080 is water soluble and quickly breaks down in the environment. It does not accumulate in the food chain or in soil.

Feratox is a fast acting or acute toxin with impacts felt within minutes, however bait shyness is a possibility and both toxins will need to be utilised in the toolkit.

In locations where wallabies or possum numbers are considered too numerous to control with firearms, these are the two types of toxins that will be used.

### **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 council and the landowner or occupier.

For properties where landowners have not agreed to the use of bait on their property, no bait will be applied. Landowners who have given permission, you will be contacted if monitoring has determined that bait needs to be applied on your property.

Prior to the deployment of toxins, Island Conservation will inform all neighbouring landowners and occupiers of the treatment area with indicative operational dates. 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.

### **How does the operational cycle work?**

While hunting remains our primary control method, targeted ground-based use of 1080 will be carried out in areas with high possum or wallaby activity, in line with permit conditions and monitoring results.

The first step of a non-toxic pre-feed to familiarise possums and wallabies with the cereal bait has been completed.

The second step involving the application of baits containing 1080 (sodium fluoroacetate) will take place from the second week of March (weather permitting).

After the 14 day treatment window, foliage with 1080 gel will be buried and cereal pellets will break down naturally. Where possible, carcasses will be removed.

### **Is the operation dependent on the weather?**

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 is required.

### **Safety precautions and water supply monitoring**

To carry out this programme, Auckland Council must get permission from the National Public Health Service – Northern Region - Auckland 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. This will include setbacks from water extraction points for potable water. Exclusion zones for toxin application will apply around dwellings and baits will not be visible from dwellings or built-up areas. We are working with landowners to understand water extraction (for human consumption) from ground-based bores and streams flowing out of the treatment area.

**Water sampling will be carried out following the toxin application for some streams from which private drinking water is taken.**

## Will my pets be affected by the operation?

Dogs are the most at-risk pets during a 1080 pest control operation. Most reported dog deaths occur after eating poisoned carcasses. **It is important dogs are closely supervised to ensure they do not enter the treatment area or scavenge carcasses.**

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

While 1080 can be deadly to dogs there have been relatively few dog deaths because of 1080 operations in New Zealand. 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 bait or scavenge carcasses
- Observe council's signage and caution periods.



If you suspect your dog has 1080 poisoning, act immediately by inducing vomiting and take your dog to the vet.

Warkworth Vets are up to date with active operations and Auckland Council have arranged for a supply of emetic medication to be available to dog owners from the island in advance of the operation through the Warkworth Vet Clinic. **Please phone Warkworth Vets for local advice and guidance regarding emetic medication on 09 425 8244.**

A supply of emetic medication will also be available on the island in case of emergency. Please contact Auckland Councils 24-hour call centre on 09 301 0101.

Dog owners on Kawau can request a muzzle from the Kawau Community Liaisons, please phone 027 266 8373 or email [kawau@islandconservation.org](mailto:kawau@islandconservation.org)

## 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 emergency response.

## 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 the public remain vigilant for as long as there is any possibility of unrecovered carcasses which will remain toxic until they have broken down. 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 going and to provide monitoring reports.

## 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 email [kawauislandproject@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:kawauislandproject@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz) or phone 09 301 0101.

We will 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](http://aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/kawau-project) or [conservationauckland.nz/kawau-island](http://conservationauckland.nz/kawau-island)

Enquire: [aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/contactus](http://aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/contactus)

 Phone: 09 301 0101

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