



Report 06.524
Date 18 September 2006
File WB/01/13/01

Committee Ara Tahi
Author Wayne O'Donnell Manager, Biosecurity

Reassessment of the Toxin 1080 by ERMA

1. Purpose

To advise Ara Tahi of the reassessment process for 1080 toxin by the Environmental Risk Management Agency (ERMA), and to invite/encourage iwi to submit on the reassessment application following public notification.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

The introduction of mammal pests such as rabbits, stoats, ferrets and possums into New Zealand has resulted in a unique and complex set of ecological and animal disease problems that responsible agencies struggle to manage.

A combination of population control methods have been the main response to these problems for over fifty years. The control focus has mainly been the brush-tailed possum, introduced from Australia in 1858. The main drivers for this have been protection of our native biodiversity and our production systems from disease (e.g. Bovine Tb National Strategy).

More recent pest control efforts have targeted stoats and ferrets. Integrated, multiple pest control programmes are being developed as we learn more about the risks that many native species face from the mixed impacts of introduced species.

Our ability to maintain effective control of mammal pests over large areas remains limited by the control tools at our disposal. Despite extensive research into biological control, traditional trap and poison technology will remain the mainstay of animal pest control in New Zealand for the foreseeable future.

The toxin sodium monofluoroacetate (1080) is used mainly for possum control and is the only toxin able to be applied aerially (brodifacoum has been applied aerially on offshore islands). The ability to apply 1080 from the air makes it a key tool for possum control in remote areas. However, it also makes it a controversial tool. Over the years, many concerns have been raised about potential adverse effects on native birds and insects, contamination of the environment and possible human health risks. The use of 1080 can and does kill deer that are valued for recreational hunting. There have also been incidents of accidental poisoning of livestock and domestic animals.

There is no doubt that 1080 use brings major benefits. However, there are also risks which must be managed carefully. In each case, the benefits must be weighed against the risks.

4. Comment

The Animal Health Board and the Department of Conservation, the major users of 1080 in New Zealand, have prepared an application for formal reassessment. The reassessment will be undertaken by ERMA under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act (HASNO) 1996.

The reassessment process was initiated nearly six years ago when ERMA announced that three commonly used substances would be reassessed under the 'new' HASNO legislation. The three substances selected were methylated spirits, 2,4-D herbicide and 1080.

The reassessment process provides a mechanism to re-examine the risks, costs and benefits of a hazardous substance and to review existing controls. The controls are conditions on use or restrictions on application types, etc that may be required to ensure the toxin is used in a manner that will not create an undue risk situation.

The applicants have prepared a comprehensive review document. Sections have been submitted to ERMA as they were completed. All information should be with ERMA by mid September 2006. A formal public notification will follow requesting submissions on the use of 1080. ERMA is then expected to make a decision in early 2007.

5. Consultation

In mid 2004, the applicants produced a discussion document titled "The use of 1080 for Pest Control". This document was circulated to a wide range of interest groups with the intention of understanding concerns before the preparation of the reassessment application commenced. Over 500 submissions were received. The majority of submitters were in support of using 1080, subject to adequate controls being in place.

During this period the Department of Conservation co-ordinated consultation with Maori. Twenty three hui were completed across New Zealand. These hui

resulted in further research being initiated to ensure all concerns were considered and, where possible, addressed.

The ERMA notification process provides six weeks for receipt of submissions, and a twenty-five day period for consideration of the application, including public hearings. The minimum time frame from application receipt to decision announcement is expected to be four months.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives*** the report.
2. ***Notes*** the content of the report.
3. ***Supports*** the reassessment process and agrees to submit on the application following public notification.

Report prepared by:

Report approved by:

Wayne O'Donnell
Manager, Biosecurity

Geoff Dick
Divisional Manager,
Catchment Management

Attachment 1: