

Appendix O: Exposure and Risk Assessment (Cyanide and Trapping): Non-Target Species

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Key points

- By-kill of non-target organisms from cyanide/trapping operations has been observed but there are few quantitative data. Wekas appear particularly vulnerable. The Agency evaluates that effects on weka populations at the local level could be major.
- The introduction of Feratox pellets onto the market in 1997 will have changed the potential exposure of non-target organisms.
- Changes in cyanide and trapping protocols on Department of Conservation (DoC) land where ground birds are present appear to have reduced by-kill, but quantitative data are lacking. The application of such protocols to land not managed by DoC is unknown.
- Secondary poisoning by cyanide is unlikely.
- The Agency has collected some information on the comparative efficacy of cyanide/trapping and 1080 operations and concludes that, in areas amenable to cyanide/trapping, the possum kill rate can be as high as that for 1080, but this is not always achieved.

- The success of pest control operations is dependent on the treatment of large blocks of land and some terrain is unsuitable for cyanide/trapping. The applicant estimates areas of land that would not be treated under a cyanide/trapping scenario based on cost compared to an aerial 1080 scenario, but there is too little justification in the application for the Agency to evaluate this analysis.

O1 Cyanide

O1.1 Transport and manufacturing process

The applicant states that transport and manufacturing processes are either:

- contained, or
- treated in the sewer system.

Exposure has therefore not been further considered other than to state that animals living or feeding in landfill could be exposed. The Agency concurs with this view.

O1.2 Use pattern

Feratox is a pea-sized encapsulated pellet. Pellets are mixed with cereal feed pellets or mixed in peanut-butter paste (Eason and Wickstrom, 2001). Feratox formulations are always used within contained bait feeders or bait bags.

Cyanide pastes are supplied in a tube and applied in bait feeders or bait bags, or laid by hand as pea-sized baits on natural features such as twigs and rocks.

Bait feeders contain 200 g or more of pellets or paste, and should be distributed 50-100 m apart in a grid. Bait bags contain about 40 g and should be distributed at 10-15 m intervals along lines 100 m apart, depending on the density of the possum population (Henderson et al 1999)

Hand-laid paste should not be applied directly to soil or plants, to minimise degradation of the bait. Two nights after application hand-laid baits that are not taken should be destroyed by forcing the bait into the ground where they will degrade. This practice reduces the chance of 'bait-shyness' developing (Henderson et al 1999).

Cyanide is often used in combination with traps with operators using cyanide baits between traps (Henderson et al 1999).

ACVM (2002) provide more recent advice including:

- Pellets:
 - Mix with non-toxic cereal feed pellets or peanut based feed paste and presented to possums in specially designed pellet feeders.

- Optimum height off the ground for the feeder is 17 cm or 2 m if stock are present.
- Position feeder against post or tree, away from direct sunlight and the prevailing wind.
- Locate in clear area of bush showing signs of possum.
- Ideally locate on slope so carcasses roll away from beneath it.
- Paste:
 - Position 10 cm off ground or >2 m off ground if stock have access.
 - In a position, for example, in hollows or cracks in branches or trunks of trees, where cannot be dislodged by passing possums or stock.
 - Never use near a place with public access, particularly by children.

O1.3 Aquatic life

O1.3.1 Expected concentration of cyanide in water

Since cyanide pastes are applied in bait stations/bags or by hand, operators should ensure that they are kept away from water. Feratox pellets are only used in bait stations or bait bags, which should also be kept away from waterways. Consequently, cyanide baits are unlikely to enter water if applied properly. Conceivably spilt baits, for example from rodent damage to bait bags, might be washed into waterways after very heavy rainfall. If this occurs, the concentration of cyanide in the water will be affected by the amount entering the waterway, rapidity of degradation and the flow and volume of the waterway. Cyanide is expected to volatilise rapidly from water or degrade (Appendix D). Cyanide may also form iron complexes that will be removed via sedimentation (Eisler 1991).

The experiment described by Wright and Manning (2003) (Appendix D) suggests that Feratox pellets spilled into waterways, or washed there in a flood, could continue to release cyanide over several weeks. Such cyanide would rapidly volatilise, degrade or precipitate. Cyanide pastes, if they did get into waterways, would be expected to be less persistent.

¶ No data from monitoring of environmental concentrations has been identified.

O1.3.2 Risk to aquatic organisms

Despite the high acute toxicity of cyanide to aquatic organisms, the expected low exposure is very unlikely to lead to effects in waterways.

O1.4 Soil organisms

O1.4.1 Concentrations of cyanide in soil

Paste formulations in bait stations are unlikely to get onto soil. Non-contained pastes may be placed on rocks or twigs and therefore will come

into direct contact with soil, indeed, it is recommended that hand-laid baits be ground into the soil if they are not taken.

¹The results of field studies have shown that rodent interference with bait bags can lead to a large proportion of baits being spilled onto soil. In one field trial, Mehrtens and Gaze (2003) found that 450 bait bags were removed from trees after 3-4 nights although only 97 dead possums were found. The authors concluded that a high proportion of bait bags may be damaged by rodents leading to pellets dropping to the ground beneath the bait station.

Some additional work has been performed to test other designs of bait station. Morgan (2004) looked at six devices containing various vertebrate toxic agents to determine their longevity and suitability for maintenance control. One of these devices was Feratox in paste, sheathed in an inverted bottom half a 1.25 litre soft-drink bottle. The reduction in cyanide (Feratox) concentration was rapid compared to the other toxicants (Feracol, PestOff 1080 pellets, PestOff brodifacoum pellets, No Possums 1080 gel, No Possums chloecalciferol gel), but it is not clear to what extent this was due to the bait station and to what extent to the type of bait. By 10 months there had been approximately 80% loss of cyanide.

Presumably where Feratox pellets are dislodged from bait stations/bags, any contamination will be limited to under the bait station.

'Clean' soil may contain a background concentration of cyanide of 0.48 mg/kg. Concentrations around pellets may reach 8 mg/kg (Wright and Manning, 2003), although there is some uncertainty about this figure (Appendix D).

O1.4.2 Risk to soil organisms

² Soil is very likely to be contaminated with cyanide during cyanide operations. Concentrations around pellets or paste spilled on soil could be sufficient to cause an effect on the soil microbial community given toxicity values of 0.3 mg/kg (Appendix D). Any such effects are likely to be extremely localised. The Agency is unaware of any data on toxicity of cyanide to soil macro invertebrates.

O1.5 Plants

O1.5.1 Exposure of plants to cyanide

Plants can take up cyanide (Eisler 1991) and some are also capable of degrading cyanide into non-toxic compounds (Yu et al 2005). The exposure of plants is likely to be low reflecting slow leaching of cyanide from pellets and rapid loss of cyanide from the soil whether introduced from non-encapsulated paste or pellets.

No monitoring data of soil concentrations of cyanide during cyanide-trapping operations has been identified.

O1.5.2 Risk to plants

There is very little information on the toxicity of cyanide to plants exposed through the soil. However, the low concentrations of cyanide in soil and the localised distribution of such contamination are considered very unlikely to give rise to effects on plants.

O1.6 Non-target animals

O1.6.1 Exposure of non-target animals to cyanide: Direct

Exposure of non-target animals will occur either through direct access to paste or bait stations or spilled bait. The Agency is unaware of any quantitative information on direct access to baits although weka, for example, have been recorded visiting bait stations (Sweetapple et al, 2006). It would seem very likely that non-target animals would be exposed to pastes and spilled pellets.

The applicant states that the HSNO controls will lead to a reduction in exposure to cyanide baits.

The controls in Gazette Notice No 141, Hazardous Substances (Vertebrate toxic agents) Transfer Notice 2004, that reduce birds being exposed to cyanide are:

- 10(1) specifies the colour baits may be: green or blue. This makes them less attractive to birds whose colour vision is more focussed at the red/orange end of the spectrum; and
- Schedule 3: 3(1), the requirement to obtain permission to use cyanide on land administered or managed by DoC. This enables DoC to impose conditions on the use of cyanide if there are concerns about potential effects on native species at a particular site.

2 DoC's procedures on land where flightless ground birds occur were altered in 2005 to ensure that bait stations/bags containing are raised at least 70 cm above the ground. More recently, DoC has stopped the use of Feratox¹ on its land after it became clear that baits are still spilled even from raised bait stations. These restrictions will not always be applied on land not managed by DoC.

Ongoing research is looking to develop Feratox pellets by devices to which weka do not have access. Prototype devices include Feratox pellets inserted into liquorice inside a section of plastic tube suspended on fishing line, and a spring-based device on a stake that exposed the Feratox pellet only when an outer sheath was pulled down. Early experiments (Morriss

¹ Feratox (475 g/kg encapsulated cyanide pellet) with prefeed cereal pellets in bait stations; Feratox (Biobag/striker) (475 g/kg encapsulated cyanide pellet) with prefeed paste in bait bags; Feratox (Hard block) (475 g/kg encapsulated cyanide pellet) with prefeed block in bait stations; Feratox (Hard block) (475 g/kg encapsulated cyanide pellet) with prefeed block in bait bags.

et al 2006) showed that possums access the bait in both devices, rats and weka cannot access the bait in either device, deer accessed the Feratox in the first device but not the second and cattle can destroy the spring-loaded device by trampling. Morriss et al (2006) comment that both devices need further development.

O1.6.2 Monitoring of non-target organisms

Agency conclusion

- Qualitative records of by-kill
- Few quantitative studies of by-kill available.

The Agency notes that the introduction of Feratox pellets onto the market in 1997 will have changed the exposure of non-target organisms, in particular the pellets are more persistent than non-encapsulated baits. Data from old monitoring studies may therefore not be directly applicable to ongoing operations.

Daniel and Williams (1984) reporting on the conservation status of New Zealand's bat species review the cause of death for the 40 bats where this has been recorded. Cyanide poisoning was attributed to one bat found on a cyanide bait line. The authors speculate that this cause of death may be under-reported particular for the short-tailed bat (*Mysticina tuberculatus*) due to its terrestrial feeding habit and the fruit-lures used to attract possums to cyanide baits. The applicant concludes that *it appears unlikely that native bat populations are affected by the use of cyanide pastes laid on the ground*, but justification for this conclusion is not provided.

Spurr (1991) states populations of 18 bird species were monitored during a combined trapping and cyanide poisoning operation in Charleston Forest in 1978. Most species showed no change in abundance, but weka numbers decreased and fantail and tomtit numbers increased one week after the operation. Spurr concludes that it is not possible to conclude that weka numbers decreased since the trial was unreplicated. Spurr (1991) also report that kokako numbers were monitored during a combined trapping and cyanide poisoning operation in Mapara Forest in 1988. Forty-one kokako were identified before the operation, 40 were re-located afterwards. No kokako were found dead although one harrier was found.

† Spurr (2000) quotes the information contained in Reid (1985, 1986) and Pracy (1958) indicating weka and kiwi deaths resulting from cyanide usage and states that as a result, DoC stipulates that cyanide baits must be raised above 70 cm in known weka and kiwi areas on land managed by the Department. Spurr (2000) does not state how successful this has been in reducing by-catch, although the applicant says that it "appears to have significantly reduced the numbers of weka and kiwi killed". Tomtit, robin, silvereve and tui deaths have also been reported after the use of hand laid cyanide (Spurr 2000). Spurr (2000) states that there has been little research into the long-term impacts of cyanide poisoning on non-target

species populations although the applicant states (p 354 and p 355 of the application) that:

these deaths do not appear to have a significant impact at a population level [and] Assuming that cyanide baits are raised above 70 cm in kiwi and weka areas (in all lands not just DoC lands), it is unlikely that any native bird species will be affected at a population level from the use of uncontained cyanide pastes.

1 Mehrtens and Gaze (2003) report on ad hoc recoveries of dead weka from areas being treated with Feratox, in which the corpses have tested positive for cyanide. They drew attention to the uncoordinated reporting of such events and to try to get a better picture of weka deaths from cyanide poisoning initiated a study in which the survival of 21 weka fitted with transmitters at two sites being treated with Feratox was monitored. The Feratox baits were fixed to trees but at what height is not reported. Two birds died before the Feratox operation began and a third lost its transmitter. Three birds died close to the bait lines and a further four, untagged weka were found dead. It was assumed that all seven birds had died of cyanide poisoning, but the results of residue analysis are not included in this reference.

Subsequent analysis may have confirmed the cause of death since the applicants say that of the 3 weka with radio transmitters all tested positive for cyanide and of the four without transmitters three were tested and all tested positive for cyanide. The authors noted that of the 450 baits only 20 were still attached to trees after 3 or 4 nights, but only 97 possums were found dead. Chew marks on many of the bags indicated rodents had dislodged the bags and made them accessible to weka. They also commented that the dead weka were often found near a dead possum, which could indicate the weka accessed the cyanide from a possum-damaged pellet. The authors recommend that cyanide should not be used in areas in which weka are present and this has now been put into practice on DoC managed land (DoC SOP Assessing Applications for DoC Consent NH3008 v2.6). However, weka deaths from Feratox use could still occur outside the known range of weka and off public conservation land.

Fisher and Fairweather (2004) quote records of deaths during operations using cyanide.

Table O1: Non-target native species deaths

TABLE 4 NON-TARGET NATIVE SPECIES DEATHS REPORTED DURING OPERATIONS USING CYANIDE

| Feratox in bait bags | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|--|
| SPECIES | TOTAL FOUND DEAD | NUMBER OF OPERATIONS INVOLVED | NUMBER OF CASES WHERE RESIDUES CONFIRMED | SOWING RATE | REFERENCE |
| Birds Weka | 14 | 4 | 8 | With prefeed paste Recent sign | Nelco-38812 |
| Feratox in bait stations | | | | | |
| SPECIES | TOTAL FOUND DEAD | NUMBER OF OPERATIONS INVOLVED | NUMBER OF CASES WHERE RESIDUES CONFIRMED | SOWING RATE | REFERENCE |
| Birds Weka | 3 | 3 | 1 | With prefeed paste Ferafeed bait stations | (Peter Gazz & A MacAlister pers comm) |
| Weka | 2 | Unknown | | Feratox in Kilmore bait stations | (Adrian Couchman pers comm) |
| Cyanide paste in bait bags | | | | | |
| SPECIES | TOTAL FOUND DEAD | NUMBER OF OPERATIONS INVOLVED | NUMBER OF CASES WHERE RESIDUES CONFIRMED | SOWING RATE | REFERENCE |
| Birds Weka | 1 | 1 | 1 | | (Geoff Woodhouse pers comm) |
| Cyanide paste in bait stations | | | | | |
| SPECIES | TOTAL FOUND DEAD | NUMBER OF OPERATIONS INVOLVED | NUMBER OF CASES WHERE RESIDUES CONFIRMED | SOWING RATE | REFERENCE |
| Birds Kea | 1 | 1 | 1 | With apple prefeed paste in a Romark bait station | (Mark Beardsley pers comm) |

Source: Fisher and Fairweather, 2004

The applicants have stated that in drawing up the studies shown in Table O1, account was taken only of operations that included a single control technique and reported percentage kill.

Recent monitoring data are not available for species other than weka. The Agency concludes that in the absence of such data the risks of cyanide to other bird species are unknown.

Eason and Wickstrom (2001) quote (PCE 1994) stating that there have been several reports of sheep, cattle and dogs ingesting lethal amounts of recently laid baits.

O1.6.3 Exposure of non-target organisms to cyanide: Indirect

Exposure of non-target animals could occur through consumption of animals killed by cyanide or having received a sub-lethal dose. The only relevant information relates to Feratox pellets, and so this information has to be read-across to pastes.

Eisler (1991) reported that prompt analysis is required after poisoning for residue data to have any meaning, since cyanide can form in carcasses. It is assumed that this was done in the data that have been reported.

Morriss et al (2003) fed possums Feratox pellets embedded in peanut butter-based FeraFeed[®] and sampled body tissues at intervals up to 336 h after the possums died. The mean cyanide residues are shown in Table O2.

Table O2: Mean cyanide residue concentrations in possums killed by Feratox

Table 1 Mean cyanide residue concentration (\pm SE) present in possum tissue and blood after being killed by Feratox

| Time (h) | Mean (\pm SE) cyanide residue | | | |
|----------|----------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | Stomach contents (μ g/g) | Liver (μ g/g) | Blood (μ g/ml) | Muscle (μ g/g) |
| 0 | 589.8 \pm 191.7 | 6.9 \pm 0.8 | 14.8 \pm 1.6 | 0.3 \pm 0.1 |
| 6 | 292.3 \pm 75.1 | 25.7 \pm 7.1 | 27.8 \pm 5.7 | 1.1 \pm 0.4 |
| 12 | 64.9 \pm 28.0 | 31.8 \pm 11.0 | NA | 0.3 \pm 0.2 |
| 48 | 94.0 \pm 39.6 | 48.5 \pm 15.0 | NA | 0.3 \pm 0.1 |
| 168 | 14.0 \pm 3.2 | 24.8 \pm 3.1 | NA | 0.2 \pm 0.1 |
| 336 | 1.9 \pm 0.7 | 1.9 \pm 0.6 | NA | 0.0 |

NA: not assessed

Source: Morriss et al (2003)

Using a dog bodyweight of 8.1 kg and an LD₅₀ of 4.1 mg/kg, the authors conclude that a dog would need to eat 56 g or approximately half a possum's stomach contents to receive the LD₅₀. Six hours after a possum's death, the dog would have to eat a whole stomach contents. Residues in other tissues are unlikely to have been sufficiently high for such a dog to consume the LD₅₀. The authors stress that insect activity or warmer conditions in the field might lead to more rapid decrease in residues, but cooler conditions could lead to less rapid decrease. The applicants conclude that on this basis secondary residues *are probably insufficient to cause secondary exposure* (sic, result in exposure equivalent to the LD₅₀). Given the rate of decrease in residues after death and assuming that a dog would not eat stomach contents exclusively, this conclusion is justified for dogs. Clearly, a smaller predator than a dog would need to consume a smaller proportion of a possum's stomach contents. A 1 kg weka with an estimated LD₅₀ of 10 mg/kg bw would have to consume approximately 14 g of stomach contents from a freshly killed possum to receive the LD₅₀ and would have to open the stomach first.

Morriss et al (2003) also looked at whether Feratox pellets swallowed whole would kill possums. Six animals had a Feratox pellet placed down their throats. One animal subsequently died, 2 excreted the pellet partially digested and leaking cyanide (7-11 μ g HCN/h when first recovered, 18-54 μ g HCN/h, 3 days later, compared to 0.2-0.3 μ g HCN/h for intact pellets) and the other three did not excrete the pellet and showed no signs of toxicity. Residues in the possum that died were 4.2 μ g/g (liver) and 1.9 μ g/g (stomach contents). Detected were 0.51 μ g/g residues in the liver of one of the three possums that appeared to digest the pellets. Comparison of these data with those for possums that crushed the pellet (Table O2) indicates that residues in possums that swallow pellets whole are unlikely to cause a risk to dogs or other predators that subsequently consume them.

The Agency has no information on how frequently possums consume Feratox pellets whole.

Fisher and Fairweather (2004) report a range of residues in kea, weka and dog carcasses recovered during pest control operations.

Table O3: Cyanide residues in carcasses

TABLE 3 CYANIDE RESIDUE LEVELS RECORDED IN CARCASSES IN NEW ZEALAND DURING PEST CONTROL OPERATIONS

| SPECIES | SAMPLE TYPE | RANGE OF RESIDUES (mg/kg) | REFERENCE |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Birds | | | |
| Kea (<i>Nestor notabilis</i>) | Liver | 1.2 | VPRD ¹ |
| | Stomach | 0.15 | VPRD |
| Weka (<i>Galirallus australis</i>) | Liver | 0.15 - 50 | VPRD |
| | Muscle | 0.51 - 4.33 | VPRD |
| Mammals | | | |
| Dog (<i>Canis familiaris</i>) | Liver | 0.39 | VPRD |

¹ VPRD = Vertebrate Pesticide Residue Database 2004

The information in this table has been derived from studies which carried out direct analyses of free cyanide in animal tissues following a lethal dose/death from cyanide poisoning

Source: Fisher and Fairweather (2004)

Fisher and Fairweather (2004) also quote G. Woodhouse (personal communication) giving a residue in weka of 26 mg/kg from a pest control operation using cyanide paste in bait bags.

O1.6.4 Risk to non-target organisms

The applicants considered that exposure of birds, other than weka, native mammals, terrestrial invertebrates and herpetofauna is not expected to occur. The Agency considers that the data on exposure and population monitoring during Feratox operations are insufficient to draw conclusions for anything other than weka. The Agency has interpreted effects on fauna in terms of effects on weka.

Use of Feratox pellets will lead to pellets falling to the ground, for example after rodent interference with bait bags. Such baits will be available to non-target organisms. A single pellet contains sufficient cyanide to kill birds and smaller mammals. More than one pellet would be needed to kill larger livestock. However, the ability of smaller animals to break the Feratox pellet has not been demonstrated. The only animals shown in trials and monitoring of field operations to be adversely affected by Feratox operations are weka. The kill of weka in such operations is anticipated to have a major effect on weka populations at a local level, although there is no population monitoring or modelling of long-term trials to determine whether this would lead to local extinction. Assuming that effects at a local level could lead to the viability of local populations, widespread use of Feratox could lead to an effect on the species' viability.

The impact on weka populations is sufficiently major that DoC have banned the use of Feratox on DoC land where weka are present.

The applicants considered that exposure of birds, other than weka, native mammals, terrestrial invertebrates and herpetofauna during the use of paste in contained situations is not expected to occur. The Agency considers that the data on exposure and population monitoring during cyanide paste operations are insufficient to draw conclusions for anything other than weka. The applicants consider that the likely magnitude of effect on weka will be minor, on the basis that few deaths have been reported through the use of cyanide paste in bait stations. The Agency concludes that given the dearth of information there is substantial uncertainty around this conclusion.

There are accounts of mortality during operations using hand-laid (uncontained) cyanide paste, including a lesser short-tailed bat and birds including tomtit, robin, silvereye, tui, weka and kiwi. There has been little research into the long-term impacts of cyanide poisoning on non-target species populations although the applicants state that effects at the population level are unlikely to be significant. Given the number of bird deaths DoC has stipulated that cyanide baits must be placed above 70 cm in areas where weka and kiwi are foraging. It is not known to what extent this has reduced the number of birds killed. The applicants estimated the magnitude of any effects to be minor, the likelihood unlikely (birds) and very unlikely (bats). The Agency concludes that given the dearth of information there is substantial uncertainty around this conclusion.

On the basis of the low residues seen in the carcasses of possums poisoned by cyanide, the Agency considers it improbable that secondary poisoning would occur.

O2 Trapping

O2.1 Use pattern

The applicant states that leg-hold and kill traps are used but does not discriminate between them in terms of their effects. Spurr (2000) quotes Warburton (1992) as stating that there is no evidence that different sorts of leg-hold traps result in different capture rates.

Kill traps of various designs are also available. The Timms trap was designed specifically for possums, but is not commonly used by commercial trappers due to its size, weight and inefficiency at catching possums (Miller 1993, in Warburton and Orchard 1996). Warburton and Orchard (1996) tested the killing efficiency of five models of kill-trap used at that time and concluded that only one of them met all the standards set in a draft ISO standard under development at that time (Warburton and Orchard, 1996 ref Gilbert 1991). The Agency has no information on the extent of use of kill traps today.

Henderson et al (1999) state that traps are set at sites frequently used by possums. Generally 5-15 traps are set per hectare for at least three nights. Traps should be visited every 24 h. In areas with ground birds, traps can be placed in trees with similar capture efficiency to those placed on the ground.

O2.2 Non-target animals

Consideration of the risks traps pose to non-target species is restricted to field information on the catch rate and kill/maiming rate of caught animals. The applicant considered birds only.

O2.2.1 Weka

Weka are ground foraging birds and their weight is sufficient to trigger traps set for possums. The applicant states that:

- 1 Significant numbers of weka have been caught where they gain access to traps. For example, traps have been used as a tool for eradicating weka introduced to some offshore islands, for example, Whenua Hou. Where weka numbers are low or in decline, the numbers accidentally caught during pest control operations can place weka populations in jeopardy.

The applicants also state that during the eradication of possums from Kapiti Island between 1980 and 1987, all practical precautions were taken to minimise bird captures (Spurr 2000) and accidental captures of ground birds, including weka were reduced by raising leg-hold traps 700 mm above the ground. Based on these results, DoC introduced Standard Operating Procedures that require traps being used on lands managed by the Department, where ground birds are known to be present, to be set 700 mm above the ground, either on platforms, attached directly to tree trunks, or attached to a sloping board set at 38° to the ground. To comply with these guidelines the National Possum Control Agencies have developed a raised trap set protocol for monitoring possum control operations.

However, research has shown that weka are able to jump 90 cm (but not 100 cm) and can walk up boards and poles sloped at up to 45° (but not 55°)(Thomson et al 2001). Sweetapple et al (2006) also looked at kill-traps fitted with weka excluder devices and concluded that the devices needed modification before they could be recommended. They also recommended that the possum-killing efficiency of traps set >1 m above the ground needs to be compared with weka-excluded traps on the ground and leg-hold traps on boards.

The applicants state that:

catch rates of weka have been reduced since the implementation of DoC guidelines on trap heights, [but] weka continue to be caught in traps during pest control operations. It is thought that the current capture rates are not high enough to have a significant population level effect.