

Report to the Utility Services Committee
from Murray Kennedy, Strategy and Asset Manager

Possum Control in the Wainuiomata and Orongorongo Catchments

1. Purpose

To provide information on the possum control operation in the Wainuiomata and Orongorongo Catchments carried out in mid 1999.

2. Background

Various possum control operations have been carried out in the past in the Wainuiomata and Orongorongo water supply catchments. Success has been variable.

Over the last few years there has been a gradual increase in the *Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium* counts in the raw water supply at the water treatment plant (WTP). Also inspection indicated varying levels of impact on the forest health caused by possums

3. Control Operation

After consulting with Landcare officers it was decided to undertake a comprehensive operation against the possums. Preliminary work included an assessment of possum numbers.

An extensive public relations campaign was carried out. This included media releases, letters to and meetings with neighbouring land occupiers, newspaper advertisements and signage on the perimeter of the catchments. There were also discussions with the Medical Officer of Health and our water supply customers.

Since the operation was carried out in winter when water demand was low, it was possible to close the Wainuiomata WTP. Baits were dropped from a helicopter. The flight paths are shown in **Attachment 1**.

The cost of the operation was \$144,000 with funding from Utility Services, Landcare and the Animal Health Board.

4. **Results**

The pre and post-operation results are included in the report (**Attachment 2**). Excellent results were achieved. The target was to catch 5 percent or less in the traps placed after the operation. The actual percentage was 1.9.

5. **Long-term Impact**

Several factors contribute to the increase in the possum population post the operation. This makes it difficult to predict when a follow up will be necessary. However, as a guide, a possible time frame before repeating the operation is three to five years.

6. **Recommendations**

That the report be received and the information noted.

Report prepared by

Approved for submission

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Attachment: 1. Helicopter flight paths for 1080 drop
2. Pre and post-operation results