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Committee Ara Tahi
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Proposed Bovine Tb Management 2004/05 - 2006/07

1. Purpose

To provide details to Ara Tahi on the proposed Bovine Tb vector control programme for 2004/05 to 2006/07, which Greater Wellington manages on behalf of the Animal Health Board.

2. Background

Greater Wellington is contracted to the Animal Health Board to provide vector management services in the Wellington Region. These services aim to assist the AHB to achieve its objectives under the National Pest Management Strategy for Bovine Tb. The Strategy's principal objective is to reduce the number of infected cattle and deer herds to internationally accepted limits by 2012/13.

Vectors are wildlife species that are known to transmit the disease to domestic stock. They include possums, ferrets, and red deer. The main focus to date in the Wellington region has been on reducing possum numbers. Ferret control has been restricted to waterways, particularly in the Wairarapa. To date, the Council has not issued contracts for the direct control of feral deer.

Greater Wellington's role, as Vector Manager, is to develop three-year control plans for AHB approval, and to implement these plans by way of contestable vector control contracts. Greater Wellington is also responsible for managing contractor capacity and regional communications on the Strategy.

3. Proposed Vector Control Programme

The AHB has recently approved the vector management plans for the years 2004/05 to 2006/07 inclusive. These plans provide for an expansion of the vector control programme with annual budgets increasing from the current \$5.8M up to \$8M. The final annual total is dependent on Crown funding

limitations and national priorities. The proposed budgets will be spent on the following activities (total area in hectares) –

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Possum control	349,767	409,326	388,815
Ferret control	35,441	35,461	30,030
Surveys	<u>89,668</u>	<u>189,865</u>	<u>276,197</u>
Totals	474,876	634,652	695,042

Surveys are undertaken of wildlife in specified areas to determine if the Tb disease is still prevalent. Surveys must be completed for three consecutive years in areas where there are no infected herds to determine whether the status should be changed from a vector risk to a vector free area. A status change has significant implications for herd testing frequency. A Tb free wildlife can also lead to the cessation of vector control.

The original draft vector control plan for 2004/05 was considerably larger (an additional 127,000ha) but due to AHB funding constraints, had to be later reduced. The main increase in activity comes from wildlife surveys, rising from 7,000 ha in 2003/04 to 276,000 ha in 2006/07.

4. Vector Control Contracting

Up until the mid 1990's, all vector control fieldwork was undertaken by the Greater Wellington Bovine Works Unit. Since then there has been a steady increase in the amount of work being openly tendered. In 2003/04, approximately 70% of all control work was contested. Greater Wellington has a two-year agreement with the AHB to provide 30% of the work to the new Greater Wellington Business Unit (known as BioWorks). From 2006/07, all vector control work (possum, ferrets, and surveys) will be openly tendered.

Greater Wellington has around 10 companies registered to undertake vector control. These include local contractors and companies that operate nationally. In recent years there have been very few new entrants, a reflection of the high risks and stringent performance targets that contractors are required to meet.

A second contracting industry has arisen following the introduction of a standard performance measuring system. The residual trap catch protocol is used to measure the success or otherwise of all possum control contracts. Each contract has a specific trap catch target. This measurement is undertaken by separate monitoring contractors.

5. Control Methods & Consultation

Vector control contractors are required to identify the control methods they intend to use when submitting tenders. Greater Wellington staff determine if the methods are appropriate for the contract area. The successful contractor is obliged to secure all approvals and consents required before commencing control work. Consultation with landowners is a critical component of the contractors communication plan. In some cases, consultation with a wider group is required. For example, the proposed application of 1080 onto public land will require that the contractor consult with a host of affected and interested parties. Greater Wellington staff will assist the contractor to identify these parties.

The AHB has an obligation to consult with iwi on matters of significance that arise as a result of their national strategy. At the regional level, Greater Wellington (as Vector Manager) will initiate contact with iwi, and provide key contacts to contractors to enable them to consult at the local level.

Greater Wellington staff aim to provide an annual overview of the programme to Ara Tahi. Any issues raised can be addressed with individual iwi where and when required. Our intention is to openly discuss issues well in advance to ensure vector control contracts adequately address any iwi concerns.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended to Ara Tahi that the report be received and the contents noted.

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