

**Media Release**

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## **Alternative possum control products already available**

Auckland pest control specialist Connovation Limited says New Zealand has safe and proven possum control products that should be used in conjunction with many aerial 1080 operations, and which would have prevented the recent kea and deer deaths on the West Coast.

Seven keas died after eating 1080 poison which had been dropped from the air by the Department of Conservation (DOC) as part of its ongoing programme to control predators such as possums, stoats and rats. The deaths were revealed by a follow-up study carried out by DOC to monitor the impact of 1080.

Connovation's CEO Duncan MacMorran says aerial drops of 1080 are continuing on the margins of many bush areas in New Zealand where it would be safer and affordable to use ground-based control methods. He says these ground methods are more target specific and do not run the risk of non-target deaths from secondary poisoning.

The company developed and sells Feratox®, a popular form of ground bait for possums in New Zealand. Feratox are encapsulated cyanide pellets that are low risk to handle. Pellets are dispensed from enclosed bait feeders or paper bait bags, similar to small pie bags, which are biodegradable.

Mr MacMorran says Feratox was developed with investment through the Animal Health Board and the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology specifically to provide an alternative possum control product for use on bush margins where there is interaction between livestock and control operations.

"Products like Feratox are widely used by pest control contractors around New Zealand and have a lot of advantages. They're not spread aurally over the bush, and being in bait stations, don't present the same risk as 1080 to birds and insects," says Mr MacMorran. "They are also more environmentally friendly – the pellets don't leave any residue on the forest floor or in the dead possums.

"While 1080 is the only poison that can be dropped from the air and may be suitable for large areas of inaccessible land, ground methods are a sensible strategy in many bush margin areas to minimise non-target and secondary poisoning death."

Martin Brenstrum from Central Districts Pest Control Limited employs 26 staff who carry out ground-based pest control operations around the North Island.

“It’s feasible to use ground control over quite large areas of difficult terrain and some of the alternatives to 1080, when applied properly, are just as effective at getting rid of possums, provided experienced, skilled and highly motivated operators are used.”

Mr Brenstrum says possums are currently controlled by alternatives to 1080 on much of New Zealand’s farmland with his team having carried out pest control operations on about 200,000 hectares of farmland habitat each year for the last three years.

Connovation’s Duncan MacMorran says 1080 has been used for more than three decades but ongoing, total reliance on the toxin is out of step with public opinion and evidence of effective alternatives.

“It’s time to re-evaluate how we can best control possums and other damaging predators while also ensuring minimum social and environment impact. Using ground control methods has challenges, but they’re ones we must meet if we are to have humane and sustainable pest control programmes supported by the affected communities.”

### **Further Information**

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