

## Executive summary

This report reviews the Taranaki Regional Council's performance and achievement on its pest animal management functions for the 2007/2008 year. The report also fulfils the Council's statutory obligation under section 85 of the Biosecurity Act to review and report back on its performance as the management agency with respect to activities undertaken under the *Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals*.

Set out below is a summary of the main activities carried out by the Council in 2007/2008:

- The Operational Plan for *Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals* was reviewed.
- The implementation of the 'Self-help Possum Control Programme' on the Taranaki ring plain continues to be the main focus of the Council's pest animal management activities. This programme focuses on the Council treating properties and then facilitating the land occupiers' maintenance of reduced possum numbers.
- As of 30 June 2008, 3 757 properties comprising approximately 227 000 hectares, or 96% of the ring plan, have been incorporated in the Self-help Possum Control Programme and occupiers are undertaking possum control maintenance.
- Initial possum control was undertaken this financial year on 48 properties, covering 3431 hectares in the Kaimata operational areas. Monitoring results record that Council's target of reducing possum levels to below 5% Residual Trap Catch was met. Pre control monitoring found possum levels to be at 34% RTC (residual trap catch). Council's control reduced the population to an estimated 3.9%. This equates to an 83% population reduction.
- The Council inspected 547 properties in the Self-help Possum Control Programme. Inspections confirm that overall compliance with the strategy rules for possum control has been satisfactory. Five Notices of Direction directing occupiers to control possums were issued.
- Monitoring confirms that occupiers in the Self-help Possum Control Programme have been very effective in maintaining reduced possum numbers in areas treated by the Council. In 2007/2008, the mean Residual Trap Catch for the 341 properties monitored was 7.5% with 24% of properties being over the Council's target of 10% (down from 30% last year).
- The Council undertook targeted possum control on 23 properties in the Self-help Possum Control Programme or bordering the Programme, including 19 properties adjacent to Egmont National Park.
- The Council responded to 347 public enquiries pertaining to pests – most enquiries pertained to ants, possums and mustelids.
- Through the Council's pest management activities, significant parts of Taranaki have effective long term pest control, which contributes towards community efforts to enhance agricultural production and indigenous biodiversity and amenity values in the region.



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

This report reviews the Taranaki Regional Council's ('the Council') performance and achievement on its pest animal management functions for the 2007/2008 year.

The report also fulfils the Council's statutory obligation under section 85 of the Biosecurity Act 1993 to review and report back on its performance as management agency with respect to activities undertaken under the *Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals*.

## 1.2 Background

The Council has accepted responsibility for pest animal management in the Taranaki region, a responsibility derived from the Biosecurity Act 1993.

Under the Biosecurity Act, the Council prepared and adopted its third pest management strategy – the *Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals* – in 2007. The 2007 Strategy provided a strategic and statutory framework for the management of 23 harmful animal species identified as pests in the Taranaki region. Pest animals in the Taranaki region in the 2007 Strategy are:

- Rook;
- Brushtail possum;
- European rabbit;
- Brown hare;
- Feral cat;
- Feral deer – Red, Sika, Sambar, Fallow, Rusa, White-tailed and Wapiti deer;
- Feral goat;
- Feral pig;
- Magpie;
- Mustelids – Ferret, Stoat and Weasel;
- Argentine ants; and
- Pest fish – brown bull-headed catfish, koi carp, *Gambusia* and rudd.

The Council also undertakes general 'non-strategy' functions under the Biosecurity Act. Non-strategy functions focus on the provision of advice and information relating to other potentially harmful animals.

### 1.2.1 Objective

The overall objective for pest animal management activities for 2007/2008, as set out in the Council's 2007/2008 *Annual Plan* is to:

*"Control pest animals to minimise their adverse effects on biodiversity, primary production and the regional economy and environment."*

### 1.2.2 Performance measures

In response to the above objective, the Council adopted the following performance

measures for 2007/2008, as set out in the Council's 2007/2008 *Annual Plan*:

- Implement the Council's *Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals 2001*:
  - extend the *self-help possum control programme* on the Taranaki ring plain by undertaking initial control operations on not less than 4 000 hectares;
  - support the *self-help possum control programme* by ensuring that landholders maintain possum populations within acceptable limits (10% residual trap catch) on land already included (218 000 hectares);
- Commence pest control in selected key natural areas<sup>1</sup> for biodiversity protection;
- Monitor, provide advice on, and, if necessary, implement small-scale control of unwanted animal organisms;
- Undertake surveillance and, where necessary, control of other pest animals, including feral goats, deer, cats, hares, mustelids, pest fish and magpies;
- Advise, monitor and where necessary enforce or undertake control of rabbits and ants; and
- Undertake direct control and eradication of rooks.

## 2. Report on progress

### 2.1 Operational Plan for Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals

Under section 85 of the Biosecurity Act the Council, as management agency for the *The Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals* (the Strategy) must prepare an Operational Plan for the implementation of the Strategy. The implementation of programmes identified in the Operational Plan and the achievement (or otherwise) will be reviewed annually and reported on (no later than five months after the end of each financial year) in significant activity reports for pest animal management (i.e. this report).

The key operational proposals for pest animal management for the 2007/08 year were:

- Undertake a **publicity and education programme** to increase public awareness and ability to identify Argentine Ants and to encourage the public to report any sightings.
- Work with the Department of Conservation and New Plymouth District Council to **develop a joint approach** to Argentine ants.
- Investigate the feasibility of **eradicating** Argentine ants from Patea.
- Undertake **initial possum control** on up to 4 000 hectares in the Kaimata area.

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. Key Native Ecosystems

- Develop a **memorandum of understanding** with the Department of Conservation (DOC) on possum management on the boundary of Egmont National Park (ENP).
- Undertake a **joint boundary possum operation** with DOC along a portion of ENP boundary.
- Establish a **joint approach to pest fish** management with DOC to address such issues as data management for recording sightings, public awareness etc.
- Develop the following **information and advice** material: mustelid and cat control in Key Native Ecosystems and control of hares and rabbits in riparian plantings.
- Gather **information for publicity purposes**, in conjunction with DOC, on the pest status of feral goats.
- Prioritise **Key Native Ecosystems** and contribute to development of integrated Biodiversity Plans for 10 Key Native Ecosystems. Commence working with landowners on pest control issues.

## 2.2 The Self-help Possum Control Programme

The implementation of the 'Self-help Possum Control Programme' on the Taranaki ring plain continues to be the main focus of the Council's pest animal management activities. Possums are arguably New Zealand's number one pest and are having an extraordinary impact on agricultural production, animal health and indigenous biodiversity values. The Programme is effectively a joint programme between the Council and land occupiers and achieves a level of possum control that would otherwise be beyond the resources and capability of any one party to manage alone.

The Self-help Possum Control Programme is focused on the Taranaki ring plain and its aim is to reduce possum numbers to low levels (i.e., less than 10% Residual Trap Catch or RTC) and keep possums numbers at that low level. Each year, the Council facilitates possum maintenance control by providing an advisory, inspectorial, enforcement and operational service for all properties in the Self-help Possum Control Programme and for which the Council has, in previous years, undertaken initial possum control.



*Council Officer Kerry Matthews discusses the self help programme with Rahoitu farmer Len Pentelow.*

In the Self-help Possum programme there are three types of monitoring: Initial control monitoring evaluates the success of the initial knock down operation, Programme monitoring evaluates the effectiveness of the programme over time by monitoring a set of random trap lines and compliance or performance monitoring which targets specific properties.

### 2.2.1 Undertake initial control

Each year, the Council aims to expand the area of ring plain included in the Self-help Possum Control Programme. This year, it was increased by about 3 500 hectares.



Figure 1: Self help possum operational areas as at 30 June 08

In 2007/2008, possum control activities were undertaken in the Kaimata operational area (see Figure 1). This involved 48 properties, covering 3431 hectares. As experienced last financial year, there was a difficulty in finding suitable local operators to carry out this work, leaving Council staff to manage the Kaimata operation.

The Self-help Possum Control Programme is only extended to those areas where Council has obtained at least 75% occupier support to be in the Programme recognising that following initial possum control, occupiers then assume responsibility for on-going possum control. Of note, over 96% of local land occupiers supported having the Programme extended into their area.

### 2.2.2 Monitoring initial possum control operations

In relation to the effectiveness of the initial possum control operations, the Council aims to reduce possum numbers to below 5% Residual Trap Catch. Possum numbers kept below 10% Residual Trap Catch pose no or little threat to agricultural production, substantially lower the risk of animal diseases such as Bovine Tuberculosis becoming established in and spreading to feral animal populations, and will protect most indigenous biodiversity values. When achieving a 5% Residual Trap Catch, not only are the benefits of that control enhanced but it also allows land occupiers some lee-way in terms of their possum control responsibilities (i.e. after initial possum control, land occupier obligations apply that require occupiers to maintain possum populations below 10% Residual Trap Catch).

Monitoring results for the Toko

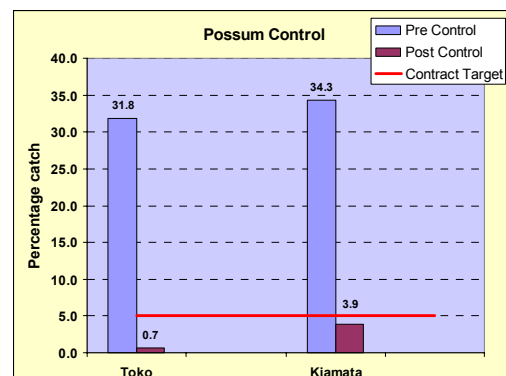


Figure 2: Monitoring of results of initial control in the Toko and Kaimata operational areas.

operation (undertaken last financial year, but monitored this year) and the Kaimata operational area are illustrated in Figure 2. This monitoring confirms that the Council achieved and bettered its 5% Residual Trap Catch target for initial possum control. Following initial possum control, possum numbers were reduced from a Residual Trap Catch of 31.8 to 0.7 in the Toko control area, and from a Residual Trap Catch of 34.3 to 3.9 in the Kaimata control area.

As at 30 June 2008, 3 757 properties comprising approximately 227,326 hectares have been incorporated into the Self-help Possum Control Programme. This represents approximately 96% of privately owned land on the ring plain where possum infestation levels have been reduced to a level that protects agricultural production values and animal health on the ring plain. Reducing infestations of possums also protects indigenous biodiversity values on the ring plain and contributes to the protection of such values in the Egmont National Park.

### 2.2.3 Providing advice to land occupiers

In 2007/2008, Council officers contacted 3 437 occupiers to provide property specific advice and other assistance to properties that have been treated and incorporated in the Self-help Possum Control Programme. Such advice and assistance seeks to co-ordinate occupiers' possum control efforts and promote regular maintenance once they are in the Programme. All properties were contacted, and advised to undertake possum control that year. About 30% of those land occupiers contacted were advised that, due to monitoring confirming low possum numbers in the area, they would not need to undertake possum control maintenance this year. These tend to be small property owners with clean areas.

### 2.2.4 Training and certifying landowners

In the 2007/2008 financial year, Council ran 4 training and certification courses to enable 45 landowners and contractors to obtain their controlled substance licences, as required under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act. These licences replaced the old vertebrate pesticide licences. Three Council staff are qualified test certifiers, and by running the course in-house the Council can assist landowners obtain their licences at a greatly reduced cost.

Council also provided advice and information to land owners on the use of bait stations and leg hold traps. This advice and information ensures landowners set traps efficiently and according to protocols to reduce likelihood of bycatch.

Council staff also provided firearms training and licensing for 17 land occupiers.



*Regular property specific advice and assistance is provided to all occupiers in the Programme*

## 2.2.5 Compliance monitoring

The Council inspected properties to ensure that occupiers were complying with the strategy rule to maintain possum numbers at below a 10% Residual Trap Catch level<sup>2</sup>. The Council's focus was on Category C properties (i.e. properties in the Programme that, without possum control, may harbour high possum densities).

The inspections confirmed that overall occupier compliance with the Strategy rules for possum control has been satisfactory.

## 2.2.6 Enforcement

In 2007/2008, Council officers served five Notices of Direction on occupiers directing them to control possums on their land (compared with the four Notices of Direction served in the preceding year).

In other instances, where Council officers identified concerns relating to high possum levels, occupiers were warned of the need to undertake possum control. Subsequent inspections confirmed that occupiers had responded to that advice and undertaken the required possum control. No other enforcement action (i.e. default action or prosecution) was necessary.

Of note is that since the inception of the Self-help Possum Control Programme, the Council has rarely needed to undertake enforcement action to enforce land occupier obligations to control possums. The Council has never needed to undertake prosecution action.

Furthermore, it has only needed to undertake default action (i.e. where the Council undertakes possum control and recovers the costs from the occupier) on two occasions – the latest being January 2000.

Table 1 summarises Council activities undertaken in 2007/2008 to facilitate maintenance of the Self-help Possum Control Programme – including a comparison with the preceding two years.

**Table 1: Measures to facilitate maintenance**

Measures adopted	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
No. of properties in the Programme	3 481	3 723	3 757
No. of properties contacted for maintenance	2 877	3 413	3 437
No. of properties inspected	505	509	547
No. of Notices of Direction	3	4	5
Other enforcement action	0	0	0



*Biodegradable bait station, laced with free feed and flour. Bait station is made out of potato starch.*

## 2.2.7 Programme monitoring

<sup>2</sup> i.e. out of 30 trap catch nights, less than 3 possums are caught.

The Council monitors possum numbers for properties in the Self-help Possum Control Programme to determine the overall effectiveness of the land occupiers' maintenance. This firstly assists in identifying 'hot-spots' but also evaluates the success of the programme overall in maintaining low possum numbers on the ring plain.

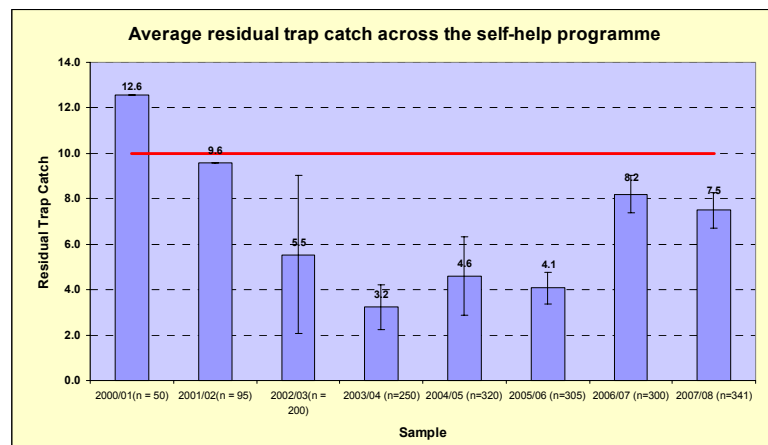
In 2007/2008, the Council randomly selected and monitored 341 properties to determine possum numbers. These properties represent approximately 9% of the properties in the Programme. The mean Residual Trap Catch for those 341 properties was 7.5% (Table 2). Of the 341 properties, 85, or 24% were over the 10% Council target. Council staff followed up these 'hot spots' with all the individual land occupiers to ensure possum control work was undertaken.

**Table 2:** Results of Programme monitoring

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Number of properties monitored	320	305	300	341
Mean Residual Trap Catch	4.6	4.1	8.2	7.5
Number of lines exceeding 10% Target	32	34	89	85
Percentage exceeding 10% Target	10%	11%	30%	24%

Of the 341 properties monitored, 190 of those trap lines were monitored after land occupiers had done their possum work. This gives a clearly indication of possum levels across the ring plain once annual possum control had been undertaken, and therefore an indicator of the overall success of the programme. The average residual trap catch for those 190 properties was 6.8 (i.e. well below the Council's target of 10%). However, 40 properties (21%) exceeded the Council's target.

Therefore, based on the monitoring undertaken, land occupiers have been generally successful at maintaining possums at very low levels throughout the self help possum programme (Figure 3).



**Figure 3:** Average Residual Trap Catch figures from monitoring the self help programme

## 2.2.8 Undertaking direct control for land occupiers

In accordance with the *Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals*, the Council undertakes further possum control on properties in the Self-help Possum Control Programme where, through no fault of the occupier, further possum control is required to protect the integrity of the Programme.

Targeted assistance involved Council officers trapping possums on properties where there was a history of pest control but which, for a variety of reasons (e.g.

poison shyness, the large amount of bush/pasture margin), needed extra assistance.

In 2007/2008, the Council provided targeted assistance to 23 properties (compared with 6 properties in the preceding year). 19 of these properties were adjacent to Egmont National Park in a joint operation with the Department of Conservation to reduce reinfestation from the park.

### 2.2.9 Operation Egmont

Over the next two financial years the Department of Conservation will treat the Egmont National Park. Council staff are involved in the planning of this operation to ensure an integrated approach to possum control across both private and public land. Possum control requirements for landowners immediately adjacent to the park have been relaxed in preparation for this operation, in an attempt to reduce the likelihood of possums developing bait shyness through ingesting a non-lethal amount of poison.

The Operational Plan (and the Strategy) proposed the development of a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Conservation on possum management on the boundary of Egmont National Park. Work towards this has progressed with Council and DOC staff developing an agreement on a joint control programme for the National Park and its immediate boundary. This could form the basis of a future MOU between the agencies.

## 2.3 Pest control programmes on Key Native Ecosystems

The 2007 Pest Animal Strategy indicated that Council would consider undertaking and funding the direct control of any pest animal having significant and adverse impacts on indigenous biodiversity values associated with privately owned Key Native Ecosystems.

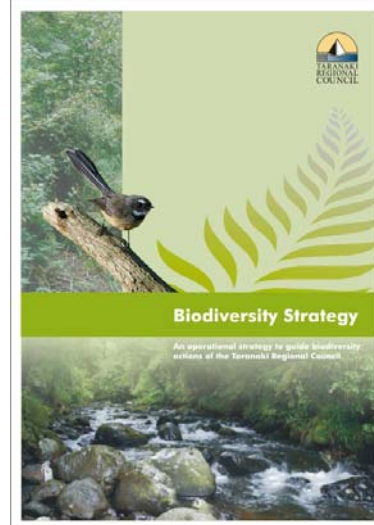
The development of the *Biodiversity Strategy: an operational strategy to guide biodiversity actions of the Taranaki Regional Council* sets out the approach for prioritising, planning and implementing biodiversity management actions for Key Native Ecosystems.

49 of the Key Native Ecosystems are included in the self help possum programme, and so already have a degree of pest control.

Sites for additional pest management are those where landowners are willing to work with Council to progress pest control for biodiversity.

Council's existing site led pest control programme on identified Key Native Ecosystems involves several major operations being carried out in partnership with either other agencies or community groups (Table 3).

Council staff also assisted with land owner liaison to extend the stoat trapping programme to safeguard blue duck habitat, a programme undertaken by



Department of Conservation, East Taranaki Environment Trust and the Central North Island Blue Duck Trust

**Table 3:** Summary of pest management on Key Native Ecosystems

Key Native Ecosystem Site:	Progress	Summary of pest management activities at that site.
Toko wetland	Biodiversity Plan prepared with landowners.	Landowners have killed numerous predators in and around the wetlands including mustelids, hedgehogs and cats. They report their catches to the Council.
Rapanui Petrel Colony	Biodiversity Plan prepared with the Trust.	Council staff carried out annual inspection of predator proof fence and carried out rabbit control.
Tom and Don's Bush	Biodiversity Plan prepared with owners (Forest and Bird).	Council funding will be used to set up predator control. Night shoot carried out by Council staff for riparian protection.
Te Wairoa	Biodiversity Plan prepared with owners (Forest and Bird)	Forest and Bird carry out predator control.
Ngati Tama Whitecliff area	Management Plan already in place.	Council is project managing the 1080 aerial possum control operation to achieve biodiversity outcomes set out in management plan for the area. The operation is likely to happen in August 08.
Kaweora Block	Biodiversity Plan in preparation.	Council undertakes pest control of this block for possums.
Nowell's lake	Biodiversity Plan in preparation.	Council staff undertook hare and rabbit control.
Sandy Bay		Ngati Tara Oaonui Sandy Bay Trust carry out predator control, particularly of hedgehogs and feral cats, and report numbers to Council. Council planning to upgrade traps next financial year.
Matau/Purangi	Management Plan already in place.	Council has continued to provide advice and support including financial support to prepare marketing proposal to progress predator control over the area.
Maketawa stream bush	Biodiversity Plan prepared with landowners	Landowner undertaking come predator control on a trial basis.
Rotokare Scenic Reserve	Management Plan already in place.	Council has continued to provide advice and support (such as storage and monitoring of bait), along with financial support for the pest eradication programme.
Umutekai	Biodiversity Plan prepared with landowners.	Biodiversity Condition funds secured to put in place predator control. Rat and bird surveys have been conducted, prior to predator control commencing.
Te Wawa wetland	Biodiversity Plan prepared with landowners.	Predator traps installed and serviced by community volunteer. Numbers of animals killed provided to Council.
Julian's pond	Draft Biodiversity Plan prepared.	Predator control recommended but yet to commence.

## 2.4 Monitor and control other pest animals

### 2.4.1 Control undertaken of other pests, including rabbits, feral goats, deer and magpies

Most pest control undertaken by the Council is associated with the Self-help Possum Control Programme. However, as circumstance permit, the Council will undertake other pest control in response to public requests. Table 4 summarises the number of animals killed under such circumstances.

Facilitating rabbit control activities ensures that rabbit infestation levels do not affect neighbouring properties thereby protecting agricultural production values – particularly on sheep and beef properties. It also protects silviculture and horticulture values.

In 2007/2008, the Council received and responded to 24 requests for information in relation to the control of rabbits (compared with 30 requests in the preceding year). No enforcement action was necessary.

**Table 4:** By kills and other pest control

Pest animals	Number of animals destroyed			
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Possums	34	62	325	1279
Rabbits	242	457	295	767
Rooks	1	0	0	0
Feral goats	52	178	147	415
Hares	126	421	172	510
Mustelids	26	23	27	34
Magpies	572	446	387	397
Feral cats	217	431	120	171
Feral pigs	1	6	4	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 271</b>	<b>2 024</b>	<b>1477</b>	<b>3577</b>

In 2007/2008, the Council destroyed 397 magpies following public reporting of birds which were a particular nuisance, e.g. a threat to children.

Most other pest control undertaken by the Council in 2007/2008 was confined to by-kills.

The Council also continued its support of the North Taranaki Branch of the RSPCA. Ten traps have been loaned long-term to the Society resulting in the capture of both stray and feral cats – mostly in and around New Plymouth.

### 2.4.2 Eradication of rooks

The Council remains committed to eradicating rooks from Taranaki. Rooks are extremely difficult birds to control and, once established, can represent a serious problem.

In 2007/2008, the Council only received 1 enquiry regarding rooks. Despite investigations no nests were found. Reports are usually generated during the duck

shooting season when people are out and about, and when rooks are more likely to be frightened into moving from Hawkes Bay across to Taranaki.

While Council will continue to monitor rooks, early indications are that Taranaki may now be 'rook free'.

Activities to control rooks for eradication purposes have so far prevented the establishment of rooks in Taranaki thereby protecting agricultural and horticultural production values, and indigenous biodiversity values in the region.

### 2.4.3 Argentine ant programme

In 2007/08 the Council carried out an intensive publicity campaign around all known infested areas. This involved setting up an Argentine Ant road show. The display was visited by approximately



*Argentine Ant road show*

170 people with many of them bringing ant samples in for identification. While no new infestations were discovered, many of the infestations have grown in size, with a satellite infestation discovered in Bell Block.

Intensive monitoring was undertaken to identify the extent of the known infestation. Results concluded that most of the infestations had expanded. Currently status of Argentine Ant populations is set out in Table 5.

In 2007/2008, the Council responded to 186 enquiries for advice on Argentine ants (up from 87 the previous year).

**Table 5:** Approximate number of distinct Argentine Ant populations.

Area	Estimated number of populations:	
	2006/07	2007/08
Waitara	400-500	200
Bell Block and satellite population		400
Blagdon	20	60
Tukupa		30
Oakura and satellite	20	60
Patea	20	30

The Council has also sourced and is supplying to affected land occupiers, at cost, the only two pesticides available in New Zealand that are known to be effective against Argentine ants – *Xtinquish* ant bait and *Ant Stop Granules*.

The feasibility of eradicating Argentine ants from Patea (a task proposed in the Operational Plan) was not investigated. This will be explored in the 2008/09 financial year.



Council Officer identifying Argentine Ants

## 2.5 Respond to requests for information and other enquiries

Each year, the Council receives numerous requests from the public for information on pest management. All public enquiries are recorded and responded to and a report made with respect to each investigation. Council's response varies from providing advice and information over the telephone and the distribution of information pamphlets and booklets to and providing property specific advice and other assistance related to pest control.

In 2007/2008, the Council received and responded to 347 specific requests from the public for information on pest animal management (Table 6), including those relating to Argentine Ants.

Most public enquiries relate to requests for information on the control of Argentine Ants (due to the publicity programme), possums and mustelids.

The Council's pest advisory service facilitates land occupier efforts or ability to control pests and contributes towards the protection of agricultural production and indigenous biodiversity and amenity values.

**Table 6:** Number of pest related enquiries

Pest animals	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Possums	44	40	22	42
Rabbits	33	20	30	24
Rooks	8	11	2	1
Feral goats	2	4	3	3
Hares	4	4	1	5
Mustelids	51	47	40	38
Feral deer	-	3	0.	0
Feral pigs	1	2	0	0
Magpies	38	31	26	21
Feral Cats	3	13	18	27
Argentine Ants				186
Pest Fish				0
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>347</b>

The Operational Plan proposed that information and advice material would be developed for mustelid and cat control in Key Native Ecosystems and control of hares and rabbits in riparian plantings. An information sheet advising landowners of the need to control hares and rabbits has been developed. The Operational Plan

also proposed that information would be gathered for publicity purposes, in conjunction with DOC, on the pest status of feral goats. This work has been deferred to the 2008/09 financial year.

The Operational Plan also proposed that a joint approach to pest fish management (new surveillance pest species under the Strategy) would be developed with DOC to address such issues as data management for recording sighting, public awareness etc. This is also work that has been deferred to the 2008/09 financial year.

## **2.6 Monitor, provide advice and, if necessary, implement small-scale control of unwanted animal organisms**

No small-scale management programmes under section 100 of the Biosecurity Act were considered in 2007/2008. Notwithstanding that, there were other harmful animals that are not declared to be 'pests' or 'unwanted organisms' that Council officers provided advice on and occasionally controlled.

Council also responded to 46 requests for advice and information in relation to the control of other animals not declared to be 'pests' or 'unwanted organisms'. These primarily related to the control of bees and wasps, spiders etc. The Council responded to all enquiries within 24 hours.

### 3. Conclusion

In conclusion, with minor exceptions, the Council met all its performance targets for 2007/2008 in out in the Council's *2007/2008 Annual Plan* for its pest animal management functions.

Implementation of the Self-help Possum Control Programme continued to be the focus of the Strategy. As at 30 June 2008, 3757 properties comprising approximately 227,000 hectares – representing approximately 96% of privately owned land on the ring plain – have been incorporated into the Self-help Possum Control Programme.

In 2007/2008, initial possum control was undertaken on 48 properties in the Kaimata operational areas. The Council also provided an advisory, inspectorial and enforcement service for properties already in the Programme.

Through its monitoring, the Council can confirm that:

- The Self-help Possum Control Programme is achieving effective long-term possum control for properties in the Programme;
- Inspections confirm that occupiers are proactive in their maintenance; and
- Occupiers in the Self-help Possum Control Programme are maintaining reduced possum numbers at low levels, though it is noted that possum infestation levels will increase rapidly, within a short time, if the occupier does not undertake regular and timely maintenance.

Council's site led pest control programme is growing, in recognition of the Council's mandate under the Resource Management Act to maintain indigenous biodiversity. This programme is undertaken in partnership with landowners or community trusts or groups.

Through the Council's pest management activities, significant parts of Taranaki have effective long term pest control, which contributes towards community efforts to enhance agricultural production and indigenous biodiversity and amenity values in the region.

This report will be forwarded to key interested stakeholders for pest management.