

Executive summary

This report reviews the Taranaki Regional Council's performance and achievement on its pest animal management functions for the 2006/2007 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 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 2006/2007:

- The *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 2007, 3 723 properties comprising approximately 224,700 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 220 properties, covering 9 332 hectares in the Huatoki, Mangamahoe and Toko operational areas. Monitoring results to date record that Council's target of reducing possum levels to below 5% Residual Trap Catch were met. Because the contractor for the Toko operational area went into receivership in May, prior to making any substantive progress, the initial control has yet to be completed by year end.
- The Council inspected 509 properties in the Self-help Possum Control Programme. Inspections confirm that overall compliance with the strategy rules for possum control has been satisfactory. Four 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 2006/2007, the mean Residual Trap Catch for the 300 properties monitored was 8.2% with 30% of properties being over the Council's target of 10%. These higher than usual monitoring results were due to more accurate placement of monitoring traps in suitable habitat, as a result of better GIS information.
- The Council undertook targeted possum control on 31 properties in the Self-help Possum Control Programme or bordering the Programme, including 25 properties adjacent to Egmont National Park.
- Joint monitoring and control operations around Egmont National Park were carried out with the Department of Conservation.
- The Council responded to 250 public enquiries pertaining to pests – most enquiries pertained to ants, mustelids, bees/wasps, possums and magpies.
- 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 2006/2007 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 second pest management strategy – the *Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals* – in 2001, this was reviewed in 2007. The 2001 Strategy provided a strategic and statutory framework for the management of 18 animal species identified as pests in the Taranaki region. Pest animals in the Taranaki region in the 2001 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; and
- Mustelids – Ferret, Stoat and Weasel.

Under the Strategy adopted by Council in May 2007, further pest animals were added to include Argentine ants, 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 2006/2007, as set out in the Council's 2006/2016 *Long-Term Council Community Plan* is to:

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

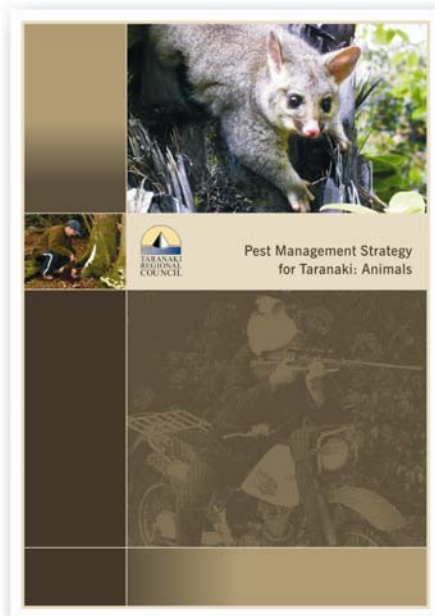
1.2.2 Performance measures

In response to the above objective, the Council adopted the following performance measures for 2006/2007, as set out in the Council's *2006/2016 Long-Term Council Community 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 12 000 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 (205 000 hectares);
- Monitor, provide advice on, and, if necessary, implement small-scale control of unwanted animal organisms;
- Undertake monitoring, surveillance and, where necessary, control of other pest animals, including rabbits, feral goats, deer and magpies; and
- Undertake direct control and eradication of rooks.

2. Report on progress

2.1 Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals



The Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals (the Strategy) was reviewed as required by the Biosecurity Act 1993. After following a submission and hearing process, the Strategy was approved by the Council on 4 April 2007 and became operative on 1 May 2007. The key changes in the new Strategy are:

- The inclusion of new pest animals – Argentine ants, brown bull-headed catfish, koi carp, *Gambusia* and rudd;
- A decrease in the estimated area of land to be treated and included in the Self-help Possum Control Programme on a per annum basis as the Council, during the course of the Strategy, achieves its aim of covering the ring plain;
- Provision for the Council to undertake a new pest animal management programme associated with the protection of sites with the regionally significant indigenous biodiversity values;

- The inclusion in the Strategy of statements regarding concerns over the long-term viability of the Self-help Possum Control Programme near the Egmont National Park;
- The inclusion of a statement in the Strategy that the Council will develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Conservation that sets out agreed collaborative monitoring, reporting and management programmes addressing possum control around the boundary of the Egmont National Park;
- An amendment to increase the duration of the Strategy to 2017 (from 2011) to make it consistent with the Proposed Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Plants;
- The inclusion of a new Strategy rule that all sightings of rooks be reported to the Taranaki Regional Council; and
- The inclusion in the Strategy of a statement that the Council will endeavour to control non-Strategy pests in relation to protection of key native ecosystems.

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.

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



Council staff contact every land occupier in the Self Help programme to provide advice and encouragement.

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. In past years, this increase has been by around 12,000 hectares. This year, it was increased by about 10 000 hectares and in future years the target for increase will be 4000 ha.

In 2006/2007, possum control activities were undertaken in the Huatoki, Mangamahoe and Toko operational blocks (see Figure 1). This involved 220 properties, covering 9 332 hectares. As experienced last financial year, there was a difficulty in finding local operators to carry out this work, and indeed one contractor went into receivership during this time, leaving Council staff to manage the Toko operation which is in the final stages of being completed as this report was being prepared.



Figure 1: Self-help Possum Control Programme

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.

Possum bait station trial

Council participated in an Animal Health Board run trial in the use of a new type of bait station. This research is being undertaken at a number of sites across the country. Council used 900 hectares of the Huatoki operation to trial these new bait stations. The results are not yet published, but early indications are that the new bait stations were more efficient than the standard stations.

However, the research design stipulated greater distances between bait stations than Council operations would normally use, which meant the results of the operation did not meet the Council targets of <5% RTC, so additional treatment was required. Council will await the final results of the national trial with interest.

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).

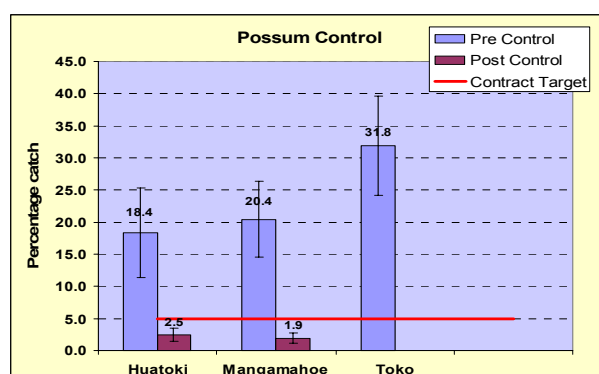


Figure 2: Possum control monitoring for the Huatoki, Mangamahoe and Toko control areas.

Monitoring results for two of the blocks – Huatoki and Mangamahoe– confirm that the Council achieved and bettered its 5% Residual Trap Catch target for initial possum control (Figure 2). Following initial possum control, possum numbers were reduced from a Residual Trap Catch of 18.4 to 2.5 in the Huatoki control area, and from a Residual Trap Catch of 20.4 to 1.0 in the Mangamahoe control area. At the time of preparing this

report, the initial control for the Toko operational area had not been completed and so no post-control monitoring results were available. However, monitoring results are expected to be available in September 2007.

As at 30 June 2007, 3 723 properties comprising approximately 224,700 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 2006/2007, Council officers contacted 3 413 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 2006/2007 financial year, Council ran 12 training and certification courses to enable 131 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. Four 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.



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

Council staff also provided firearm training and licensing for 14 land occupiers.

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 level¹. 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 2006/2007, Council officers served four Notices of Direction on occupiers directing them to control possums on their land (compared with the three Notices of Direction served in the preceding year). Three Notices of Direction have been complied with, and one property is yet to be re-inspected.

Table 1: Measures to facilitate maintenance

Measures adopted	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
No. of properties in the Programme	3 193	3 481	3 723
No. of properties contacted for maintenance	2 790	2 877	3 413
No. of properties inspected	648	505	509
No. of Notices of Direction	3	3	4
Other enforcement action	0	0	0

¹ i.e. out of 30 trap catch nights, less than 3 possums are caught.

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 2006/2007 to facilitate maintenance of the Self-help Possum Control Programme – including a comparison with the preceding two years.

2.2.7 Programme monitoring



Setting monitoring traps according to set protocols ensures consistent results.

One possible reason for the higher than usual average is that the monitoring was more accurate due to better placement of monitoring traps in suitable possum habitat, as a result of better GIS information. Furthermore, the monitoring was undertaken **before** land occupiers had undertaken their maintenance work.

The Council monitors possum numbers for properties in the Self-help Possum Control Programme to determine the 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 2006/2007, the Council randomly selected and monitored 300 properties to determine possum numbers. These properties represent approximately 8% of the properties in the Programme. The mean Residual Trap Catch for those 300 properties was 8.2% (Figure 3). This is an increase from previous years (Table 2). Of the 300 properties, 89, or 30% 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.

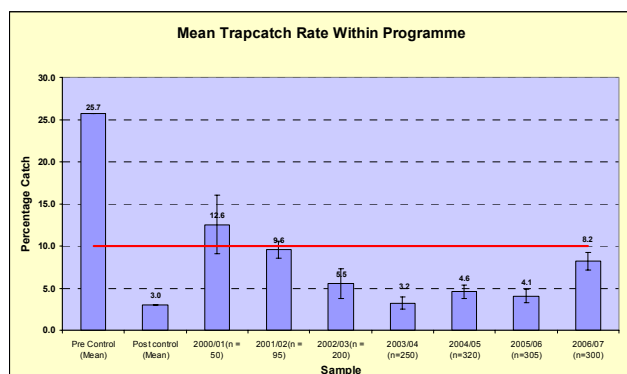


Figure 3: Effectiveness of possum maintenance over time.

However, the monitoring still indicates that the average Residual Trap Catch was still below the 10% target that occupiers are required to achieve in terms of on-going possum control. Thus, based upon the monitoring undertaken, land occupiers have been very successful at maintaining possums at very low levels following the initial knock down operation.

Table 2: Results of Programme monitoring

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

Future monitoring will be designed to include trap lines before land occupiers undertake their maintenance work in order to identify ‘hot spots’, and will also include a portion of trap lines **after** land occupiers have done their possum work. This will give a better picture of possum levels across the ring plain once annual possum control work has been undertaken, and so will give a better indication of the overall success of the 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.

In 2006/2007, the Council provided targeted assistance to 6 properties (compared with 10 properties in the preceding year). 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.

2.2.9 Possum control adjacent to Egmont National park

The Strategy recorded concerns regarding the long term viability of the Self-help Possum programme near to Egmont National Park. Council monitoring had identified ‘hot spots’ where possum numbers in the bush/pasture margin of Egmont National Park (ENP) were unacceptably high. Council liaison with farms along the boundary had suggested that such problems were widespread along the Park boundary.



In the Strategy the Council committed to working with DOC to develop collaborative control and monitoring programmes that would maintain low

possum numbers along the boundary and to avoid the problem of possums in the Park reinvading adjacent farmland.

2.2.10 Monitoring of possum numbers adjacent to Egmont National Park

To address the concerns raised during the development of the Strategy, a joint Council/DOC project monitored possum numbers around the boundary of Egmont National Park. Possum numbers were monitored in bush, in farmland and in the bush-pasture boundary by an independent contractor and the results reviewed by Landcare Research.

Landcare Research applied a 'conversion factor' to the data which had been gathered using 'raised set traps' (to avoid catching kiwi) in order to compare it with Council's target of 10% which was established using 'ground set trap' data.

The 'conversion factor' that Landcare Research came up with was 1.62, with a 95% confidence interval of 1.40-1.87 (i.e. the conversion factor is most probably somewhere between 1.40 and 1.87, so a mean of 1.62 was used). The number of trap lines that would have exceeded the Council's target of 10% was then calculated for the bush, farmland and bush-pasture areas using the conversion factor (Table 3).

Table 3: Percentage of raised- and predicted ground-set RTC values exceeding 10% threshold using (i) the mean conversion factor (1.62) and (ii) the lower 95%CL of the conversion factor².

	No. lines	Raised-set	Predicted Ground-set	
			Mean conversion	Lower 95% CL
Farmland	40	5.0%	22.5%	7.5%
Bushline	40	2.5%	17.5%	7.5%
Bush-pasture	25	8.0%	40.0%	28.0%
All line total	105	4.8%	24.6%	12.4%

This means that once the raised set data has been converted to that equivalent to ground set data (using the average conversion factor), 22.5% of trap lines in the farmland were over the Council's RTC target of 10%, 17.5% in the bush line were over the target, and 40% of trap lines in the bush-pasture were over the target. In real figures, this would have been 9 out of 40 farmland trap-lines, 7 out of 40 of the bushline trap-lines and 10 out of 25 bush-pasture trap-lines.

Even when a more conservative conversion factor was used, there were still 28% of the trap lines in the bush-pasture zone over the 10% target (Table 3).

Table 4: Average results from the boundary monitoring

	Raised set mean	Predicted ground set mean
Farmland	2.84	4.59
Bushline	2.29	3.70
Bush-pasture	4.22	6.83

The average figures for each zone were also calculated. This found that the means for each of the areas monitored (farmland, bushline, bush-pasture) were all below the Council's 10% target (Table 4). However, from an operational perspective, being able to identify the 'hot spots' was considered more useful than the overall average as those 'hot spots' could then be targeted for control.

² Source: Landcare Research review by G.Forrester and G.Nugent, March 2007

2.2.11 Joint boundary control operation

Once the monitoring had been completed, Council and DOC completed a joint possum control operation between Kiri Road and the Stony River. The operational costs were split according to the proportion of land tenure treated. This dealt to a number of the worst hot spots identified through the monitoring.

Through the joint monitoring and control operations, the relationship with the Department of Conservation is on a much healthier footing and both agencies are now well placed to work effectively in the future, by applying an integrated approach to possum control across both private and public land.

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.

Work has commenced through the development of the Council's Biodiversity Strategy to identify key native ecosystem sites to target with more integrated pest control. Sites have been ranked according to value and threat, and sites identified where there already exists some degree of legal protection and where landowners may be 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.



Lake Rotokare – now surrounded by a predator proof fence, an island sanctuary for native biodiversity.

The Council has contributed to the development of a pest control plan for the **Rotokare Scenic Reserve** in partnership with the South Taranaki District Council and the Rotokare Scenic Reserve Trust. Council has also agreed to fund the initial pest control part of the plan over the next two financial years.

A second major Key Native Ecosystem site led pest control programme sees the Council planning a possum control operation at **Whitecliffs in North Taranaki** for Ngati Tama. This operation will be funded by the Biodiversity Condition Fund and the Council. In conjunction with undertaking this work, the Council has also agreed to manage the possum control work for on public conservation land

adjacent to the Ngati Tama land in North Taranaki. By the Council facilitating integrated pest control work across both public and private land, using the same methodology, it is anticipated that a good overall result will be achieved.

Council also supports land occupiers to undertake mustelid control on two Key Native Ecosystems through the provision of bait and traps. This financial year, Council undertook pest control inside the predator proof fence at Rapanui, 12 km south of Mokau, established to protect the only mainland colony of the grey-faced petrel.

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.

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 5 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 2006/2007, the Council received and responded to 30 requests for information in relation to the control of rabbits (compared with 20 requests in the preceding year). No enforcement action was necessary.

Table 5: By kills and other pest control

Pest animals	Number of animals destroyed			
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Possums	299	34	62	325
Rabbits	302	242	457	295
Rooks	4	1	0	0
Feral goats	3	52	178	147
Hares	114	126	421	172
Mustelids	20	26	23	27
Magpies	332	572	446	387
Feral cats	539	217	431	120
Feral pigs	-	1	6	4
Total	1 613	1 271	2 024	1477

In 2006/2007, the Council destroyed 387 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 2006/2007 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 2006/2007, the Council received 2 enquiries regarding rooks in Toko and Eltham areas. Despite investigations no nests were found. As at 30 June 2007, there have been no new reports of rooks for 8 months. 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.



Rooks have the potential to be a major pest for agriculture and biodiversity.

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



Figure 4: Current distribution of Argentine Ants

Following the discovery of Argentine ants in Taranaki in January 2006, Council investigated potential infestations, undertook some control measures, and launched an intensive media campaign to promote public awareness and encourage public reporting of other potential infestations. They were included in the *Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals, 2007*.

In 2006/2007, the Council responded to 87 enquiries for advice on Argentine ants. Council investigations have confirmed the presence of significant infestations in Waitara and Bell Block (covering approximately 400 to 500 properties combined). Smaller infestations have also been confirmed at Oakura, Westown and Patea (covering approximately 20 properties combined).

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*.

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 2006/2007, the Council received and responded to 142 specific requests from the public for information on pest animal management (Table 5).

Table 6: Number of pest related enquiries

Pest animals	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Possums	37	44	40	22
Rabbits	28	33	20	30
Rooks	8	8	11	2
Feral goats	1	2	4	3
Hares	1	4	4	1
Mustelids	49	51	47	40
Feral deer	-	-	3	0.
Feral pigs	-	1	2	0
Magpies	37	38	31	26
Feral Cats	9	3	13	18
Total	170	184	175	142

Most public enquiries relate to requests for information on the control of mustelids, magpies, possums and rabbits.

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.

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 2006/2007. 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 39 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, the Council substantially met all its performance targets for 2006/2007 in out in the Council's 2006/2016 *Long Term Council Community Plan* for its pest animal management functions.

This report reports on the final year of the implementation of the *Pest Management Strategy for Taranaki: Animals 2001*. Implementation of the Self-help Possum Control Programme continued to be the focus of the Strategy. As at 30 June 2007, 3723 properties comprising approximately 224,700 hectares – representing approximately 96% of privately owned land on the ring plain – have been incorporated into the Self-help Possum Control Programme.

In 2006/2007, initial possum control was undertaken on 220 properties in the Huatoki, Mangamahoe and Toko 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.

A joint monitoring project of possum numbers around the boundary of Egmont National Park, and a joint possum control programme has been undertaken with the Department of Conservation. Integrating operations between the two organisations will see better integrated possum control across both public and private land in Taranaki.

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.