



Ferret



Stoat



Weasel

DESCRIPTION

Mustelids is the collective name for ferrets, stoats and weasels, they were first introduced in the 1880's to control New Zealand's growing rabbit population. Unfortunately they had limited effect on the rabbit numbers. Mustelids are a group of small to medium sized carnivores. Mustelids have a large home range. They are active day and night and are opportunistic predators. They have a strong musk odour.

Ferrets are the largest mustelid in New Zealand. Male ferrets grow up to 44cm and females up to 37cm in length. The undercoat is creamy yellow with long black guard hairs that give the ferret a dark appearance. A characteristic black face mask occurs across the eyes and above the nose.

Stoats have long, thin bodies with smooth pointed heads. Ears are short and rounded. They are smaller than ferrets. Males grow up to 30cm and females up to 25cm in length. Their fur is reddish-brown above with a white to yellowish underbelly. Stoats have relatively long tails with a distinctive bushy black tip.

Weasels are the smallest and least common mustelid found in New Zealand. Males grow to 20cm and females up to 18cm in length. Their fur is reddish-brown above with a white underbelly separated by an irregular line. Their tails are short and tapering.

Mustelids are widely distributed in low densities throughout the region and, along with feral cats, have been blamed for the rapid decline in kiwi numbers in Taranaki.

VALUES AT RISK

Ecological values

Mustelids prey on native birds, lizards and insects.

Animal health and farm production

Ferrets are a threat to agriculture, particularly through their role as a vector (carrier) of bovine tuberculosis. Mustelids are a threat to poultry farms especially free range farms. Mustelids carry parasites and

toxoplasmosis, which can cause illness in humans and livestock.

STRATEGY RULES

There is no rule requiring you to control ferrets, stoats or weasels. Any control is voluntary.

THE MUSTELID BOX TRAP

The Mustelid box kill trap (Figure 1) is designed to be user friendly, inexpensive, effective and humane. It is easy to use and maintain, and is portable. There is a double wire mesh baffle at the open end of the trap to restrict the access of kiwi beaks and other non-target species such as cats and possums. The position of the access holes in the wire mesh directs the mustelid to step on the trigger plate, ensuring a kill.



Figure 1: The mustelid box trap

TRAP PLACEMENT

Ferrets

Place trap stations along linear landscape features (eg, fence lines, forest edges, waterways, roads and tracks); in isolated patches of cover; around farm buildings and offal pits; and in areas with high prey abundance such as chicken sheds or rabbit hutches.

At least one trap station should be located within each ferret's home range. Ferret home ranges can vary considerably (18 to 760 ha) so two traps placed at different locations may be necessary.

Stoats

Individual traps should be placed along tracks, ridges, habitat perimeter or other altitudinal contours and waterways.

For further advice or information about pest animal management contact:

TARANAKI REGIONAL COUNCIL

Pest Animal Management Section
Private bag 713, Stratford
Ph: 06 765 7127 or 0800 736 222
Fax: 06 765 5097 www.trc.govt.nz

Enough traps need to be used to ensure stoats will encounter them.

BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION

For biodiversity protection more traps are required to ensure mustelids encounter the traps. For small forest blocks and wetlands surrounded by pasture, traps should be spaced every 50 to 100 m around the perimeter.

For kiwi protection in large forest blocks, traps should be set on a 100 m x 100 m grid throughout the forest.

Traps should be checked at least fortnightly during the bird breeding season (forest birds - September to April; kiwi - November to June).

Outside of the bird breeding season traps can be checked monthly.

From December to March, mainly juveniles will be trapped as they disperse from their den sites, looking for new territory.

EFFECTIVE USE OF TRAPS

Traps should be left out permanently as mustelid numbers will quickly return to pre-control levels once control ceases. This is due to mustelids migrating from neighbouring areas.

To avoid spring weakening, traps should be triggered and immediately reset every four to six weeks if they have not been triggered by any animals.

Traps should be checked according to the field life of bait used as well as the occupancy rate of both target and non-target species

BAIT

Fresh rabbit meat is the most effective bait, though it must be changed every two to three days in summer, or four to five days in winter. Other bait alternatives are salted rabbit, beef fat, Erayze and fresh white hen eggs.

Bait needs to be attractive at all times. Rotten bait won't catch

MAINTENANCE OF TRAPS

It is unlikely that lubrication of the trap will be necessary. However, if you need to use a lubricant, use one that does not repel mustelids or attract non-target species (eg, fish oil or vegetable oil).

BAITING THE TRAP

Bait should be placed in the three nails inside the box, next to the trap.

Old bait should be disposed of away from the trap as it is believed that rotting bait close to traps may deter mustelids.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If you have a mustelid problem, the Taranaki Regional Council recommends the mustelid box trap which can be purchased from the Council.

SETTING THE TRAP

Step 1

Open the box to expose the trap by removing one of the retaining screws and twisting the lid to the side (Fig. 2).



Figure 2: Open the box

SETTING THE TRAP

Step 2

Stabilise the trap with one foot or knee, then grip the wire loop attached to the kill bar and lift it up and over the trip rod (Fig. 3).



Figure 3: Lift the wire loop over the trip wire.

Step 3

Check that the trip rod hangs vertically and rests against a small lip on the arm of the trigger plate while the top of the trip rod (Fig. 4) retains the kill bar.



Figure 4: The trip rod should be vertical.



Figure 5: Stoat caught in trap.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.connocation.co.nz/DOC250.html
www.doc.govt.nz/conservation/threats-and-impacts/animal-pests.html
www.predatortraps.com

PUBLICATIONS

King, EM: The Handbook of New Zealand Mammals. Oxford Press, Auckland, 1995

Mustelid	Trap Type
Ferret	DoC 250 Wooden tunnel
Stoat	DoC 200-250 Wooden tunnel
Weasel	DoC 150 Wooden tunnel