



Mt Bruce - Pukaha

Post operational report for 2008/09

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Contents

1.	Executive summary	5
2.	Recommendations	5
3.	Objective	5
4.	Operational area	6
5.	Prescriptive contract	6
6.	Results	6
7.	Discussion	6
8.	Reinvasion	7
9.	Weather	7
10.	The future	7
11.	Operating budget	7
12.	Costs	7

1. Executive summary

This is a further updated report for Mt Bruce - Pukaha for the financial year ending 2008/09. It is a follow-on report from the 2006/07 report (number GW/BIO-G-08/14).

The Mt Bruce buffer is an area of land which forms a complete protection zone around the Mt Bruce Reserve (Pukaha). The south east portion of the Mt Bruce buffer falls in the Greater Wellington region and the remainder is in the Horizons Regional Council region.

For the purpose of this report, when the Mt Bruce or the buffer area is quoted, this will refer to the south eastern area in the Greater Wellington (GW) region.

The buffer management area totals 1,502ha.

The land formation is rolling hill country which gradually gets steeper closer to the Mt Bruce Reserve (Pukaha). The vegetation varies from remnant native bush, to open pasture with many types of exotic plants throughout.

The method of control remains much the same with Fenn No. 4 mustelid traps, Timms traps and Sentry bait stations filled with Contrac rat blocks. Previously Pestoff pellets were used but with possum numbers at lower levels, there was a change of bait matrix to avoid aversion to one bait type by rats.

A possum survey carried out by GW's BioWorks Business Unit during 2007 revealed a light infestation of possums through parts of the operational area so there has been a reintroduction of Pestoff possum pellets to the bait stations to keep these possums in check.

The aim of this buffer is to reduce the reinfestation of predators into the Mt Bruce Reserve - Pukaha to allow the released endangered bird species of kokako and kiwi to live and breed with a much reduced threat of predators. All other fauna and flora will benefit greatly from this project.

2. Recommendations

This is an ongoing programme and must be maintained into the future. Not to do so would result in predators having unrestricted access to the Mt Bruce Reserve - Pukaha boundary. This would be disastrous for the Department of Conservation's (DOC) breeding programme of the rare and endangered birds.

3. Objective

- To reduce and maintain all predator numbers to very low levels and to restrict any reinfestation into Mt Bruce - Pukaha. These predators include possums, cats, ferrets, stoats, weasels, hedgehogs, ship rats and Norway rats.

4. Operational area

The Mt Bruce buffer falls into two bovine Tb operational areas. There is a large piece of remnant bush between Pukaha and the Ruamahanga River on Fred Keil's property known as "Bushgate". This bush will provide a natural corridor for the migration of native birds from outside of Pukaha.



Aerial view of the south western corner of Mt Bruce - Pukaha

5. Prescriptive contract

BioWorks undertakes the servicing of all equipment under a prescriptive contract and subsequently supplies data on predators killed along with bait used to the Biosecurity Animals Section.

6. Results

The monthly results for the 2008/09 year to the end of June are listed below:

Month	Cats	Rats	Hedgehogs	Ferrets	Stoats
October	2	81	8	1	0
November	0	67	17	0	1
March	8	21	56	3	0
Total:	10	169	81	4	1

Note: No trap data was supplied for July, August, September, December, January, February, April, May and June.

7. Discussion

Even with the servicing rounds being moved out to five week checks the predator control buffer appears to be working well.

DOC staff still remain confident that the buffer job is working well enough to compliment the work which they are doing within the interior of the Reserve. GW will need to keep options open as they move into the future and remain prepared to try new traps and ideas as they become available.

Two Biosecurity Pest Animals staff assisted DOC staff over two days with the filling of bait stations with 1080 pellets. This was carried out to obtain a quick and efficient knockdown of the high numbers of rats that were monitored within the main Reserve itself. It was important to get this job completed prior to the main breeding season to maximise the successful incubation of all native fledglings.

8. Reinvasion

Reinvasion of pest predators will always be an issue but this is not considered to be a major issue at this stage. The most important function of the buffer is to reduce the numbers of predators travelling through that could subsequently enter the Mt Bruce Reserve - Pukaha.

9. Weather

Inclement weather patterns at Pukaha can have some major bearing on the period of time required to complete a servicing interval on this operation. Pukaha is historically a high rainfall area and any prolonged wet period makes for difficult access to some of the control sites. During the winter months prior to the onset of lambing, it is impossible at times to reach all sites. As a result some are invariably missed until there is some drying out of the pasture.

10. The future

It is imperative for the success of the Pukaha project that the buffer is maintained. The aim is to continue with five weekly servicing intervals by BioWorks under a prescriptive contract.

11. Operating budget

The operating budget for this operation was under spent for the 2008/09 year. The actual budget was \$28,000.

12. Costs

Set out below is a breakdown of costs from the Greater Wellington financial SAP system up until the end of the financial year 30 June 2009.

	\$
Labour:	1,987.50
Contractors:	15,200.00
Vehicle/plant:	121.02
Materials/Supplies	1,015.45
Total:	18,323.97



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