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The purpose of this report is to set the policy for the use of certain pesticides for the control of animals in reserves on the Port Hills. It is necessary for the Committee and the Council to set the policy under which the operational Unit, in this case the Parks Unit, would take action as appropriate.

INTRODUCTION

In a report on animal pests in the Port Hills areas administered by the Parks Unit of this Council an increasingly serious situation is occurring. The main issues relate to the harsh environment of the Port Hills in which pest infestations lead to a magnified effect on the fragile vegetation; the need for protection of the current revegetation drive; and increased illegal shooting on reserve land with danger to users, surrounding residents, and vandalism. These are all related to the increase in animal pests.

The main pests causing problems include Possums; Goats; Rabbits; Hares; Rats; Stoats; Ferrets; Deer; Pigs; Wallabies; Thar; and Sheep. Parks Unit staff have held discussions with a number of parties with interests in the Port Hills area, including Selwyn District Council, Banks Peninsula District Council, Department of Conservation, and the Canterbury Regional Council, to examine an integrated pest control approach which would work through the areas on a continuous basis. The area would be divided into six blocks, one of which would be cleared each year. There will be a need to consider additional funding for this purpose over the next few years if the programme is to be successful. It will also be necessary to use a variety of control measures. Significant concerns exist about the effects on both new growth of existing native plants and on the revegetation programmes, including that of Port Hills 2000, by these pests.

To enable effective pest control to occur a number of methods must be available to the operators and these include use of a number of pesticides. The Council has approved the use of Sodium fluoroacetate (known as 1080) in the Council's Parks and Reserves, subject to the approval of the Parks Manager, and in accordance with the provisions of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 and the Pesticides (Vertebrate Pest Control) Regulations 1983.

Approval is now sought for the use of another "Controlled Pesticide", namely cyanide, as part of the integrated pest management strategy.

DISCUSSION

The Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 replaced the Pesticides Act 1979 in relation to the use of pesticides. It restricts the use of pesticides to approved operators and subject to the conditions of the licence issued by Environmental Risk Management Authority.

The Pesticides (Vertebrate Pest Control) Regulations 1983 in regulation 12 provides that no person may use a controlled pesticide in or within 400 metres of the boundaries of a local authority that is a City unless there is prior approval of the appropriate local authority and the Medical Officer of Health for the area. The applicant must apply to each of these authorities in writing. Regulation 15 provides that the Medical Officer of Health must give his permission, with or without conditions, if he is satisfied that the proposed use of the pesticide will not contravene any of the following Acts or regulations:

- The Health Act 1956
- The Poisons Act 1960
- The Toxic Substances Act 1979
- The Pesticides (Vertebrate Pest Control) Regulations 1983

Regulation 16 provides that the City Council must give its permission to the applicant where it is satisfied that the applicant has obtained the permission of the Medical Officer of Health and the proposed use of the pesticide will not harm or inconvenience the public.

In the case of the Port Hills reserves approval is being sought to use cyanide in smaller reserves and for monitoring in larger areas. The proposal is to use Feratox encapsulated Potassium Cyanide dispensed from bait stations in a peanut butter paste. These capsules require a bite equivalent to 8kg to release the poison thus reducing the risk of non-target kills. Death occurs in around 40 seconds, so this method is more humane than some other means such as Talon for example, and enables an accurate body count to be achieved. The operations will be of a shorter duration than current programmes using Talon for example. The approval for use of cyanide will add to variety of methods that will need to be used to control the increasing animal pest problem in the Port Hills reserves. Using a variety of methods assists in avoiding animals becoming “bait shy” and is seen to be able to provide better eradication rates for the time, and resources, invested.

The Medical Officer of Health has agreed to the use of Feratox Cyanide Bait in the Bush Head Reserve subject to a number of conditions relating to advertising and signage. This proposal was for the baits to be placed at the end of the working day and uplifted in the morning just after sun rise.

CONCLUSIONS

There is no doubt that there is a significant animal pest problem in the area of the Port Hills and extensive damage occurring to both existing plant cover as well as new plantings, particularly in the reserves areas. Without the ability to use the widest range of pest control measures it is apparent that the damage will increase and it will become increasingly difficult, if not almost impossible, to continue with any degree of success the revegetation programmes being implemented in these areas. The Council has already approved the use of Sodium fluoroacetate (1080) for use in its parks and reserves, subject to the approval of the Parks Manager, and of course in accordance with any approvals required under the Pesticides (Vertebrate Pest Control) Regulations 1983. It is considered a similar approval should be provided for the use of Feratox encapsulated Potassium Cyanide, particularly to control possums. The requirements for closing the areas to the public and posting notices around the areas being poisoned are required by the regulations and it is normal for public notices to be published setting out the details of the events. In the past, in giving approval to operators the Council has required explanatory notices setting out the details to be provided to residential properties adjacent to the areas being poisoned. These details have specified the times and dates of the poisoning; the specific areas in which the poison is spread; the length of time the area could be considered unsafe; and advice on keeping dogs and other domestic animals under control during the period.

- Recommendation:**
1. That a report be sought from Mr David Marshall, veterinary advisor to the Canterbury Kennel Club, as to the dangers to dogs of such poisoning programmes.
 2. That information be provided to the Council on secondary poisoning effects.
 3. That, subject to these being satisfactory, permission to use Feratox encapsulated potassium cyanide be given, subject to:
 - (a) All bait stations being made inaccessible to canines.
 - (b) No bait stations being located within 400m of residential-zoned land.
 - (c) Suitable warning notices being placed at all possible entrances to the reserve, warning of the potential dangers.
 - (d) Any dead carcasses to be removed from the reserve.