

**PREDATOR CONTROL TEAM REPORT TO THE
PUKENUI/WESTERN HILLS FOREST CHARITABLE TRUST
THURSDAY 08 AUGUST 2013**

The team has had a busy year, with two poison operations in the Ark-in-the-Park plus permanently cutting, clearing and marking with permanent plastic pink markers the 30 odd kilometres of bait station lines. We have been ably assisted in these tasks by volunteers, DOC staff, North Tec students, NRC staff, and other members of the local community. The AIP operation was monitored post poisoning and the possum Bite Mark Index and rat monitoring was successful at below expected levels (see Nigel Miller's report to the Trust).

Earlier in the year, we welcomed Chris Windust who joined our ranks as a part-time trapper. Chris has been a great help both with trapping and assisting us with the AIP project.

In March, DOC supplied 120 Philproof Bait stations to extend the AIP possum and rat controlled area plus the material to modify them. They also sent two staff for two days to assist with the modification. We have started to mark and cut tracks for the extension but, at the moment, this is on hold until after the September Poison Operation in the existing area. When the extension is complete, we will have just on 400 h/a under intensive possum and rat control.

Stoat control has continued throughout the year with over fifty weasels, stoats and ferrets being trapped. The five "Stoat" lines are now complete, with approx. 110 double set DOC 200's stoat boxes in place and 10 Conibear cat traps plus a "Buffer" line of approx. 40 DOC 250 single set boxes on the forest margin. These are located just outside the forest and are accessed from various roads and private property. These six lines total approximately 70 kilometres and are serviced at three to six-weekly intervals depending on the season.

We will be adding to the stoat lines within Pukenui as traps become available. Currently, we are waiting for 15 new double set DOC 200's in boxes from DOC at no charge, which was confirmed today by Nigel Miller. We have also reconditioned 12 double set DOC 200 boxes donated by DOC, for which Gerry has ordered new traps.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Trust for their continued support over the past year.

Many thanks to Nigel Miller from DOC who gives us great support both in technical and scientific advice and time in the forest, and to the other members of DOC who have helped with map printing and laminating, poison operations, and cutting, clearing and marking work in Pukenui.

Thanks also to Kane McElrea and the Northland Regional Council for the 50 x DOC 250 single set traps we used in the "Buffer".

Lastly, but by no means least, my thanks to the stalwarts of our team, Ian Buckley, Mark Dudley, and Gerry Brackenbury; my very good friends with whom I have enjoyed many hours of great camaraderie.

Max Hutchings