



17 October 2007

AUTHORITY WELCOMES NEW RESEARCH BEING DONE ON 1080

The Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA New Zealand) welcomes progress being made on further research into the effects of 1080 following its decision to allow continued aerial use of the pesticide.

The Authority released its decision on the reassessment of 1080 in August, confirming the value of 1080 in the fight against possums, but indicating that significant improvements are needed in using the poison. The Authority imposed tighter mandatory controls on users, including active monitoring of aerial operations by means of a watch list and better management practices. It also called for further research to be done into alternative methods of possum control and certain impacts of 1080.

The new management regime, which will be in place by 1 January 2008, will require users of 1080 to produce detailed reports for the Authority on each aerial drop carried out after that date, including comments on any incidents and public complaints.

Authority Chair Neil Walter says the Authority has written to the government about its recommendation that more research be done into 1080. "We have made it clear to the government that we would like more research funding to be made available for research into the effects of 1080, its persistence in water and soil and possible alternative ways of controlling possums."

He says the Authority is encouraged by research work already being commissioned by one of the country's biggest users of 1080 – the Animal Health Board, whose brief is to combat the spread of bovine tuberculosis. "This research addresses one of the 1080 reassessment committee's key concerns, which is the risks posed by 1080 to native plants valued by Māori such as watercress and puha."

Mr Walter says the board is helping Māori by actively taking the results of its research to Māori communities.

The Authority is also making progress on appointing someone to coordinate the 1080 monitoring and reporting regime. Applications for the position close on 17 October.

The Authority expects to release its first annual report on 1080 aerial drops around this time next year. This first report is expected to focus on the implementation of the Authority's research recommendations.

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