



Media Release

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AUTHORITY IMPOSES TIGHTER MANAGEMENT REGIME ON 1080

The Environmental Risk Management Authority announced today that it has imposed a new management regime on the use of 1080 in New Zealand.

Authority Chair Neil Walter said that tighter mandatory controls had been placed on the pesticide. From 1 January 2008 all aerial operations using 1080 will be actively monitored by ERMA New Zealand. ERMA New Zealand is also urging that further research be undertaken into alternative methods of possum control and into some of the effects of 1080.

Mr Walter said the decision followed a full-scale reassessment of the poison 1080 (sodium fluoroacetate) and all substances containing it. The reassessment took over six months and involved public submissions as well as two weeks of public hearings.

“This is the largest and most challenging exercise ever undertaken by ERMA New Zealand,” Mr Walter said. “The application was more than five years in the preparation. More than 1400 written submissions were received and we heard in person from more than 150 submitters.”

The Authority’s decision-making Committee on 1080 comprised, in addition to Mr Walter, Professor George Clark, Ms Helen Atkins and Dr Manuka Henare.

Mr Walter observed that public opinion in New Zealand is deeply divided on the use of 1080. On the one hand, pests like possums, rabbits, rats and stoats pose a major threat to New Zealand’s environment and economy. On the other hand, 1080 is seen by many to pose unacceptable risks, particularly when it comes to aerial drops. Some, but not all, of the concerns raised with the Committee were historically based and have now been addressed by improvements in the way 1080 is used. Many people who support the use of 1080 do so only because of the need to manage the threat possums pose to the environment and the economy, and the absence for the time being of any suitable alternative.

Mr Walter said that the Committee felt bound to recognise the critical importance of aerially-applied 1080 to current possum control programmes. “Our decision recognises that for the time being there is no practical alternative to the continued use of 1080 in areas where the preservation of our natural bush and agricultural production would otherwise be at serious risk.

“At the same time, our Committee took full account of the deeply-felt concerns of many New Zealanders as regards the safety of aerial drops of 1080,” Mr Walter said. “We are confident that the new management regime will manage any risks to human health or the environment. We are

recommending that the government undertake more research into some areas of continuing concern to the public.”

Mr Walter said that the decision also reflected the Committee’s view that improvements were needed in the way 1080 operations were managed, particularly aerial applications. Thus additional mandatory controls and safeguards had been imposed, a watch list was being established to enable ERMA New Zealand to actively monitor future aerial drops, further research is recommended into some of the effects of 1080 and into alternative methods of possum control and improvements are to be made in the management of aerial drops.

Mr Walter added that because of the high levels of public interest in the reassessment application, an information bulletin has been issued to supplement the formal decision. The bulletin explains the background to the reassessment, how the reassessment process was run and the Committee’s decision. It provides a general description of how the Committee evaluated and weighed the benefits, risks and costs of 1080 in such areas as the environment, the special interests of Maori, the interests of society and communities and the economy.

Mr Walter emphasised that this decision was not intended to be for all time. “A further reassessment is likely at some point in the future. The timing will depend on how well our new management regime is implemented and the response to the Committee’s recommendations.”

Mr Walter concluded by paying tribute to all those who had participated in the reassessment. “We were greatly impressed by the quality of the presentations and submissions we received from the applicants and all the submitters. Many people went to immense pains to ensure that we understood their position and views. We believe that the hearings will have resulted in a better informed public debate. They have certainly provided ERMA New Zealand with an invaluable information base. We will be making extensive use of this information as we maintain a close watching brief on the future use of 1080 in New Zealand.”

The text of the decision is available on the ERMA New Zealand website, www.ermanz.govt.nz

Copies of the information bulletin may be obtained from the ERMA New Zealand website, by emailing info@ermanz.govt.nz, or by phoning (04) 916 2426.

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