



19-E-0377 / DOC 6022442

30 July 2019

Hannah Enderby  
*via fyi.org.nz*

Dear Ms Enderby

We refer to your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation dated 10 June 2019. You requested the following:

*Re: the one Kiwi dropping that you tested for 1080 poison - and that came back as proven to have 1080 poison in it- Please provide copies of all correspondence and photos regarding this incident from the moment of first suspicion of kiwi being poisoned until 14 days after the positive test. I want to see the reasoning behind the decision to stop testing kiwi scat. And also to stop testing kiwi for 1080?*

We have treated your request as consisting of two parts. The first is a request for information about a kiwi dropping that was tested in 1998. The second seeks an explanation about decisions you assert DOC has made about testing kiwi droppings and kiwi for 1080.

### **Context to your request**

The Department has studied the effects of 1080 operations on more than 580 radio-tagged kiwi since 1990 and found that none of those kiwi died as a direct result of 1080 poisoning.

The following published research papers support these findings and indicate that kiwi are most likely to die as a result of predation or impact with vehicles, rather than as a result of 1080 poisoning:

- R.J. Pierce, and W. Sporle, "Causes of kiwi mortality in Northland", *Conservation Advisory Science Notes No. 169* (1997);
- H. Robertson et al., "Experimental management of Brown Kiwi *Apteryx mantelli* in central Northland, New Zealand", *Bird Conservation International* (2010);
- H. Robertson et al., "Survival of brown kiwi exposed to 1080 poison used for control of brushtail possums in Northland, New Zealand" *Wildlife Research* (1999) 26, 209-214;
- H. Robertson et al., "Landscape-scale applications of 1080 pesticide benefit North Island brown kiwi (*Apteryx mantelli*) and New Zealand fantail (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*) in Tongariro Forest, New Zealand" *Notornis* (2019) Vol. 66: 1-15.

## **The kiwi dropping tested in November 1998**

The dropping you refer to was tested over 20 years ago, in November 1998. It is referenced in the Department's Vertebrate Pesticide Residue Database. We have made all reasonable efforts to locate any correspondence or photos relating to this test and have found none.

Given the age of the material you seek, it is possible any such material could have been destroyed in accordance with the Disposal Authority granted to the Department under the Public Records Act 2005. However, we think it unlikely that the sort of information you have requested existed in the first place, particularly any photos of a dropping.

What we do know is that all radio-tagged rowi in that area survived for at least three months after the completion of that 1080 operation and bred successfully in subsequent years.

As we have been unable to locate information relevant to your request for photos or correspondence, we have no option but to refuse it under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act 1982.

## **Misapprehension about testing undertaken by DOC**

We note that you appear to be operating under a misapprehension where you seek information about a decision to stop testing kiwi and their droppings for 1080. There has never been a decision to stop doing so. Instead, what you are describing actually results from the practicalities of managing our endangered species on the basis of the data and evidence we have.

As we have indicated, none of the 580 kiwi we have monitored have died as a result of 1080. In the absence of kiwi being killed by 1080, testing their droppings simply isn't the best use of our resources.

The evidence we have establishes that even if kiwi eat the occasional 1080 bait, they are unlikely to die from 1080 poisoning and that introduced predators are a much, much greater risk to them.

That isn't to say that we are not vigilant about any risk 1080 might pose to kiwi. We have processes in place to deal with the situation if a kiwi was suspected to be poisoned.

The Department refers kiwi that are suspected of poisoning for an official diagnosis and toxin analysis. When dealing with a suspected 1080 related death, a necropsy is ordered (which also includes a toxin analysis).

However, a toxin analysis would not normally be undertaken where a necropsy or scene evidence clearly identifies an alternative cause of death, such as being hit by a car.

It follows that the Department has never made any decision to stop testing kiwi for 1080 where 1080 poisoning is suspected.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amber Bill', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Amber Bill  
Director Threats  
for Director-General