Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

01 FEB 2017

OIA16-0755

Gary Stephenson
Care of FYI website

Dear Gary Stephenson

**OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST**

I refer to your official information request on 18 December 2016 relating to a number of queries on the subject of the rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus (RHDV).

In answer to your questions the following information is released to you under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

1. **Can the Minister explain how the "controlled" release at 300 sites by Canterbury Regional Council in March 2018 can be called "controlled" when it is well known that this virus cannot be release controlled and will spread widely across both islands very rapidly in the same manner as the original "illegal" release of RHDV1?**

   A controlled release is one that is carefully and strategically planned to increase the success and spread of a virus into a wild pest population. It will ensure that a high quality commercially prepared product is used, the product is released at a time and in locations in which it will be most effective, and that the release can be appropriately managed and monitored as it spreads. A controlled release does not mean it will be contained within release sites, particularly if the release is planned to spread across a wider population.

2. **How does the Minister plan to stop the spread of RGDVIa-K5 to areas outside these 300 sites when the spread of RHDV1 was uncontrollable and the spread of G1/RHDV2 across Australia has been uncontrollable?**

   Please refer to the answer to question 1.



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3. **Can the Minister explain how this can be planned before any public submission, or is the public submission just an appeasement exercise and the result pre-ordained?**

   There is considerable work required to plan a controlled release of any biological control agent. It is often sensible and appropriate to do this planning in advance of any approval application process. A release plan can be developed to support an application made under the Agricultural Compounds & Veterinary Medicines Act 1997 (ACVM).

   It is required under the ACVM Act that all feedback received from the public consultation process is considered alongside the application before approval is granted.

4. **How will the Minister protect the 116,000 pet rabbits when the efficacy of the cylap vaccine has been questioned by the manufacturers, the Australian Veterinary Association, the Royal Australian SPCA and in the face of the testing and verification done by the Australian Government and their results put into doubt by an independent scientific review?**

   As previously advised in correspondence from Hon Nathan Guy, Minister for Primary Industries (Min16-0267) on 5 May 2016, the ACVM application process will assess a range of associated risk areas, including the availability of effective vaccines.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Gwyn
Director Readiness and Response Services