

7 June 2018

S C McKee
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Ref: H201804126

Response to your request for official information

Dear S C McKee

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request, received by the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 4 June 2018 requesting:

“what are the Ministry of Health guidelines these Medical Officers use to assess the health risks of 1080 in water supplies? and

What medical tests and antidotes are there to diagnose and help people who suspect they have been poisoned, even in parts per trillion level, by the A1 Ecotoxin sodium monofluoroacetate? Are these protocols provided to every doctor in NZ?”

The Ministry is refusing the first part of your request under section 18(d) of the Act as the information you requested is publicly available and can be accessed from the Ministry's website: <https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/issuing-permissions-vertebrate-toxic-agents-vtas-guidelines-public-health-units>.

In relation to the second part of your request, as with any unwell people, the treating physician will determine the appropriate clinical and other tests to diagnose and treat patients who present to them. The case definition of possible, probable or confirmed case of 1080 poisoning may include a range of diagnostic considerations and tests. During the response to the threat of 1080 in infant formula, the Ministry of Health developed case definitions for 1080 poisoning.

A possible 1080 poisoning is defined as a previously well child or adult with rapid onset of unexplained serious illness (or death) with:

- known exposure to 1080 within four hours of illness (or death)
- abdominal pain with or without vomiting, agitation and apprehension (in adults) or irritability and inconsolable crying (in children)
- rapid shallow breathing
- reduced level of consciousness.

A probable 1080 poisoning is defined as signs and symptoms of possible case, as well as metabolic acidosis with elevated lactate, and no other diagnosis.

Confirmed 1080 poisoning is defined as signs and symptoms of probable case, as well as urine testing confirming presence of 1080. However, because the half-life of fluoroacetate is unknown in humans, a negative result from urine testing is not sufficient to exclude 1080 poisoning.

Further information for health professionals responding to suspected 1080 poisoning was prepared in response to the threat of 1080 contamination of formula. This information may be downloaded from the Ministry for Primary Industries' website at <http://www.mpi.govt.nz/news-and-resources/resources/official-information-act-responses/operation-concord/> and selecting: [Operation Concord OIA response: 'Required actions...'-'Op Concord – risk assessment...'](#)

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) report on toxicity of 1080 summarises information about antidotes and may be downloaded on the following weblink: <https://www.epa.govt.nz/assets/FileAPI/hsno-ar/HRE05002/HRE05002-055.pdf>. The EPA report mentions that specific antidotes are not available for treatment of acute poisoning from 1080; nevertheless therapeutic intervention may be effective in achieving recovery after serious toxic effects from 1080 intake.

You have the right, under section 28 of the Act, to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision to your request.

Yours sincerely



Nick Allan
Manager, Government and Ministerial Services
Office of the Director General