

Habitats loss caused by introduced predators have resulted in 50 native birds in New Zealand becoming extinct each year. Rats, stoats, possums, and other introduced predators have killed 50 millions native birds in New Zealand each year. Without taking control and having pest control, many more native species will become extinct faster than two human generations.¹ 1080 is the common name for a biodegradable bait pellet DOC and other organisations use to control rats, stoats and possums. Although it is called 1080, the toxic ingredient in the bait is sodium fluoroacetate. The bait pellets are made up of sodium fluoroacetate (0.15% of each pellet), cereal, sugar, cinnamon flavour (to attract predators), and green dye (to deter birds). 1080 is biodegradable. It can naturally be broken down by the micro-organism, fungi, and plants into harmless materials. It doesn't leave permanent residues in soil, water, plants, or animals.²

The impact that rats have on our native birds can be seen on Big South Cape Island near Stewart Island, which was invaded by hop rats in 1962. Rat numbers have increased and within three years, nine species of birds had declined or disappeared from the island. Stoats are considered the 'perfect predator' for birds. Birds that nest on the ground or in holes on trees have no escape. Up to 60 percent of kiwi chicks are eaten by stoats. Possums are the major cause of the decline of many native trees such as the pohutukawa, rewarewa, kamahi, mahoe, tawa, and rata; they can also change the composition and structure of native forests.³

The department of conservation/ Te Papa Atawhai is the government agency charged with conserving New Zealand's natural and historic heritage.⁴ This group quotes " We use 1080 bait because it's safe and effective for controlling introduced predators and protecting threatened native species." 1080 is backed by science, the use of 1080 is supported through research by independent scientists and other experts. 1080 targets the introduced predators such as rats and possums. Stoats are also controlled through scavenging of poisoned rat carcasses. Decades of monitoring and research have shown that the use of 1080 operation every 2-3 years, on average, can maintain predator numbers at a low level. This allows native species to survive, breed, and increase their population. The use of 1080 is strictly regulated and carefully planned so it is safe and the best result can be achieved for the native wildlife. The key points that the department of conservation states that supports 1080 use is to ensure these operations involve helicopters in distributing biodegradable 1080 bait pellets over large, remote and rugged areas where we can't use traps. Calm weather is required, this ensures that predators consume the pellets before the rain dissolves the 1080. The number of rodents and possums are monitored before and after an operation is completed.⁵

¹ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/methods-of-control/1080/why-we-use-1080/>

² <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/methods-of-control/1080/what-is-1080/>

³ <https://pce.parliament.nz/explore/predator-control/possums-rats-and-stoats/>

⁴ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/>

⁵ <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/methods-of-control/1080/how-we-use-1080/>

The SPCA is New Zealand's oldest and largest animal welfare charity. They are dedicated to protecting and improving the welfare of animals through various means.⁶ The SPCA is against the use of 1080 in New Zealand because they believe it is a poison to kill animals due to the level of suffering they cause, as well as the nature of their use. The SPCA quote "These substances cause such intense and prolonged suffering to animals that we believe their use can never be justified." They believe that the welfare of all animals should be viewed equally. The SPCA thinks that there should be a greater emphasis on looking for solutions that would enable species who cannot be completely removed, to co-exist in the environment instead. SPCA also encourages the research and development of humane alternatives to species control, including the replacement of lethal methods with human non-lethal methods, such as limiting reproductive abilities.⁷

1080 can be viewed differently through tiakitanga. Some believe that 1080 is bad because it's an artificial toxicity for our land. They also argue that 1080 prevents access to forestry and this limits the employment opportunity relating to trapping for whanau. Tiakitanga stands by "If you don't take care of the environment, it will noy take care of you. From a tiakitanga perspective, to manage pest animals and to put the needs of the environment above the needs and wants of humans. After all, it was human greed that got us in this mess."⁸ We can help save and maintain the ecosystem by both traditional Māori practices and modern ecological principles like protecting existing forest, planting native trees, controlling pests and many more.

Considering different types of opinions for a subject is vital to help get a better understanding. Our opinions are based on our own life values, experiences and lifestyle. It is important to have more than one voice to have fairness and inclusivity. Not only this, but this can result in a better solution for the problem as this problem will impact not only one but everyone in the community.

⁶ <https://www.sPCA.nz/about>

⁷ <https://www.sPCA.nz/news-and-events/news-article/1080-what-is-it-and-what-can-be-done-about-it>

⁸ <https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/14-03-2022/is-poisoning-pests-the-maori-way>