

2025

Insight

Reaching over 5000 landowners
in Priority Possum Control Areas

Priority possum control

The regional council funds and undertakes work in over 50 Priority Possum Control Areas (PPCAs), covering nearly 523,000 hectares across the Waikato region and involves thousands of landowners.

PPCAs are areas of the region that have been identified by WRC as needing possum control to:

- protect and enhance biodiversity
- enhance primary production
- improve the stability of catchments by supporting healthy forests, and
- maintain the gains of previous or existing possum control.

Developing enduring relationships with landowners is critical to the long-term success of our PPCA programme, and we appreciate your cooperation with the control work being carried out on your property.

To see where your property lies within a PPCA, visit our online mapping service through waikatoregion.govt.nz/priority-possum-control-areas.

There is also a council factsheet on priority possum control in the Waikato available on our website. Waikatoregion.govt.nz/assets/WRC/LandOccupierFactsheetPPCAs.pdf

Relative possum density monitoring FAQs

Why do we monitor?

It's important, because it helps council decide where and when to undertake control, and to determine whether control has been effective. Our PPCAs are monitored by a specialist, independent monitoring contractor Qualmons Ltd.

What is the RTC method and why do we use it?

The aim of Residual trap catch (RTC) monitoring is to get an estimate of a possum population's relative density. An RTC of 5% or less is the level needed for many native plant species to successfully grow and maintain canopy cover, and some native birds to survive. Council's performance target is 5% for ground-based methodology, and 3% for aerial methodology. Aerial operations are highly effective and most often get the possum population down to almost undetectable levels.

How is it done?

RTC trapping normally takes place over three fine nights, and consists of trap lines of 10 leg hold traps spaced 20m apart. The start point for each line is randomly generated and can occur within any suitable possum habitat large enough to hold a line. Traps are checked daily within 12 hours of sunrise to ensure any animals caught are dispatched quickly and humanely.

What traps are used?

Trapping is carried out using No 1 double coiled spring traps. These are not 'gin' traps but smooth surfaced traps designed to hold the possums leg, but not break the skin. Traps are lured with a mixture of flour and icing sugar spread in a strip or 'blaze' behind the trap.

I have kiwi on my property, does this change how council monitor?

In areas with ground dwelling native birds, raised sets are used. This means that the traps are mounted on a platform above the ground to reduce the chance of capturing the birds.

If you have a property outside a PPCA, and you want to target possums and other pests, there are plenty of options for you to do your own predator control.

The following websites may be of interest:

- Predator Free NZ - predatorfreenz.org
- The Department of Conservation's Practical guide to trapping - doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/predator-free-2050/community-trapping/
- Conservation-related pest control products - connovation.co.nz
- Trapping supplies - goodwood.nz
- Multi-species resetting traps - nzautotraps.com.

Council also has contestable funding to support individual and community environmental initiatives. Information is available on our website Funding and scholarships | Waikato Regional Council, or contact our Pest Animal officers on 0800 801 401 or ppca@waikatoregion.govt.nz for more information.

What we're doing

1. Whenuakite Farmland

- Control completed by EcoFX in October 2024: 1.44% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2027/2028.

2. Otahu Farmland

- Trend RTC completed by Qualmons in Feb 2025: 3.82% RTC.
- This result is >5% threshold - control deferred to 2026/2027.

3. Port Waikato Farmland (north)

- Trend RTC completed by Qualmons in December 2024: 6.17% RTC.
- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2025/2026.

4. Port Waikato Bush

- Control completed by EcoFX in December 2022: 0% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2028/2029.

5. Te Kohanga Farmland

- Trend RTC completed by Qualmons in November 2024: 7.94% RTC.
- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2025/2026.

6. Onewhero

- Control completed by EcoFX in May 2025: 2.05% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2028/2029.

7. Pukekawa

- Control completed by EcoFX in June 2025: % RTC TBC.
- Potential next operation 2027/2028.

8. Glen Murray

- Trend RTC completed by Qualmons in December 2024: 6.73% RTC.
- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2025/2026.

9. Waikaretu

- Control completed by EcoFX in September 2024: 1.53% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2028/2029.

10. Naike

- Control completed by EcoFX in August 2023: 0.44% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2026/2027.

11. Whangape

- Control completed by EcoFX in June 2025: 0.81% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2027/2028.

12. Rangiriri

- Control completed by EcoFX in November 2023: 3.43% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2026/2027.

13. Rotowaro

- Control currently underway by EcoFX in June 2025: % RTC TBC.
- Potential next operation 2028/2029.

14. Matira

- Control completed by EcoFX in August 2024: 3.10% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2028/2029.

15. Te Akau

- Control completed by EcoFX in September 2023: 0.80% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2026/2027.

16. Waingarō

- Control completed by EcoFX in July 2024: 1.09% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2026/2027.

17. Mount Karioi North

- RTC trend completed by Qualmons in January 2025: 3.05% RTC.
- This result is >5% threshold – next RTC trend monitor in late 2025.

18. Mount Karioi South

- Control completed by EcoFX in December 2023: 0.30% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2026/2027.

19. Old Mountain Road (Hope Bush) – Hamilton HALO rat control

- Control completed by EcoFX in September 2024: 1.43% RTI.
- Next control scheduled for July 2027.

20. Old Mountain Road (Johnstones) – Hamilton HALO rat control

- Control completed by EcoFX in September 2024: 1.25% RTI.
- Next control scheduled for July 2027.

21. Mount Pirongia North Buffer

- RTC trend completed by Qualmons in November 2024: 6.74% RTC.
- EcoFX contracted to undertake control 2025/2026.

22. Mount Pirongia West Buffer

- Control completed by EcoFX in July 2024: 1.11% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2027/2028.

23. Oparau

- Control completed by EcoFX in July 2024: 0.48% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2026/2027.

24. Ngutunui

- Control completed by EcoFX in December 2024: 0.26% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2027/2028.

25. Waipa Puniu II

- RTC trend completed by Qualmons in February 2025: 6.78% RTC.
- EcoFX contracted to undertake control in 2025/2026.

26. Honikiwi

- RTC trend completed by Qualmons in February 2025: 4.48% RTC.
- This result is >5% threshold – control deferred to 2026/2027.

27. Hauturu Awaroa

- Control completed by EcoFX in June 2023: 4.73% RTC.
- PPCA currently inactive – control provisionally ceased.

28. Nukuhakari – Awakino 1

- RTC trend completed by Qualmons in February 2024: 7.32% RTC.
- EcoFX contracted to undertake control in 2024/2025 with work underway.

29. Nukuhakari – Awakino 2

- RTC trend completed by Qualmons in February 2025: 16.64% RTC
- EcoFX contracted to undertake control in 2025/2026.

30. Whareorino Bush

- Bush sector joint WRC-DOC (NPCP).
- Control completed by EcoFX in 2022/2023: 0.14% RTC.
- Potential next operation TBC.

31. Whareorino Farmland

- Control completed by EcoFX in June 2025: 2.76% RTC.
- Potential next farmland operation 2027/2028.

32. Pio Pio West

- Control completed by EcoFX in June 2025: 4.57% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2027/2028.

33. Mahoenui

- Control completed by EcoFX in June 2023: 4.46% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2026/2027.

34. Pio Pio East Farmland and Bush

- Farmland control completed by EcoFX in May and June 2025: 1.68% RTC.
- Bush control completed by EcoFX in May and June 2025: 0.00% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2027/2028.

35. Aria

- Control completed by EcoFX in May 2024: 1.67% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2026/2027.

36. Mokauiti 1 Farmland and Bush

- Farmland control completed by EcoFX in December 2023: 0.61% RTC.
- Bush control completed by EcoFX in November 2023: 0.76% RTC.
- Potential next operation Farmland 2026/2027 and Bush 2029/2030.

37. Mokauiti 2 Farmland

- Control completed by EcoFX in March 2024: 1.18% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2026/2027.

38. Tiroa

- Control completed by EcoFX in August 2024: 0.48% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2027/2028.

39. Waipa River

- RTC trend completed by Qualmons November 2024: 3.67% RTC.
- Trend > 5% threshold – control deferred to 2026/2027.

40. Rangitoto Buffer

- RTC trend completed by Qualmons November 2024: 2.81% RTC.
- Trend >5% threshold – control deferred to 2026/2027.

41. Arohena 1

- RTC trend completed by Qualmons in October 2024: 6.70% RTC.
- EcoFX contracted to undertake control in 2025/2026.

42. Arohena 2

- RTC trend completed by Qualmons in November 2024: 3.36% RTC.
- Trend > 5% threshold - control has been deferred to 2026/2027.

43. Waotu

- RTC trend completed by Qualmons in September 2024: 8.70% RTC.
- EcoFX contracted to undertake control in 2025/2026

44. Ngaroma 2

- Control completed by Epro Ltd in June 2025: 3.19% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2027/2028.

45. Ngaroma 1

- Control completed by EcoFX in October 2024: 3.18% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2027/2028.

46. Rangitoto Range

- Control completed by EPRO Ltd in October 2022: 1.00% RTC.
- Joint WRC-DOC (NPCP) bush sector spring 2022.
- Potential next operation TBC.

47. Mangakino

- Control completed by Epro Ltd in September 2024: 2.20% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2027/2028.

48. North Taupo

- RTC trend completed by Qualmons in October 2024: 7.72% RTC.
- Control scheduled for 2026.

49. Hauhungaroa Ranges

- Control completed by Epro Ltd in February 2024: 0.83% RTC north, 0.00% RTC south.
- Joint WRC-DOC bush sector.
- Potential next operation TBC.

50. West Taupō

- Control completed by Epro Ltd in May 2023: 1.32% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2026/2027.

51. Te Kopia – Paeroa Range

- RTC trend completed by Qualmons in October 2024: 6.27% RTC.
- Joint WRC-DOC bush sector.
- Control scheduled for 2026.

52. Waikite Valley Farmland 2A

- Control completed by Epro Ltd in December 2023: 1.33% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2026/2027.

53. Waikite Valley Farmland 2B

- RTC trend completed by Qualmons in October 2024: 6.27% RTC.
- Control scheduled for 2026.

54. Tirohanga Road – Hamilton HALO rat control

- Control completed by EcoFX in September 2024: 0.00% RTI.
- RTI trend currently underway by Qualmons.
- Next control scheduled for July 2025 by EcoFX.

55. Pukemako/Sanitorium Hill – Hamilton HALO rat control

- Control completed by EcoFX in September 2024: 0.00% RTI.
- RTI trend currently underway by Qualmons.
- Next control scheduled for July 2025 by EcoFX.

56. Te Miro – Whitehall

- Control completed by EcoFX in June 2025: 2.54% RTC.
- Potential next operation 2027/2028.

57. Te Miro Reserve – Hamilton HALO rat control

- Control completed by EcoFX in October 2024: 1.67% RTI.
- RTI trend currently underway by Qualmons.
- Next control scheduled for July 2025.

58. Te Tapui Block B – Hamilton HALO

- RTC trend completed by Qualmons in January 2025: 3.15% RTC.
- Trend in late 2025 - Control deferred to 2026/2027.

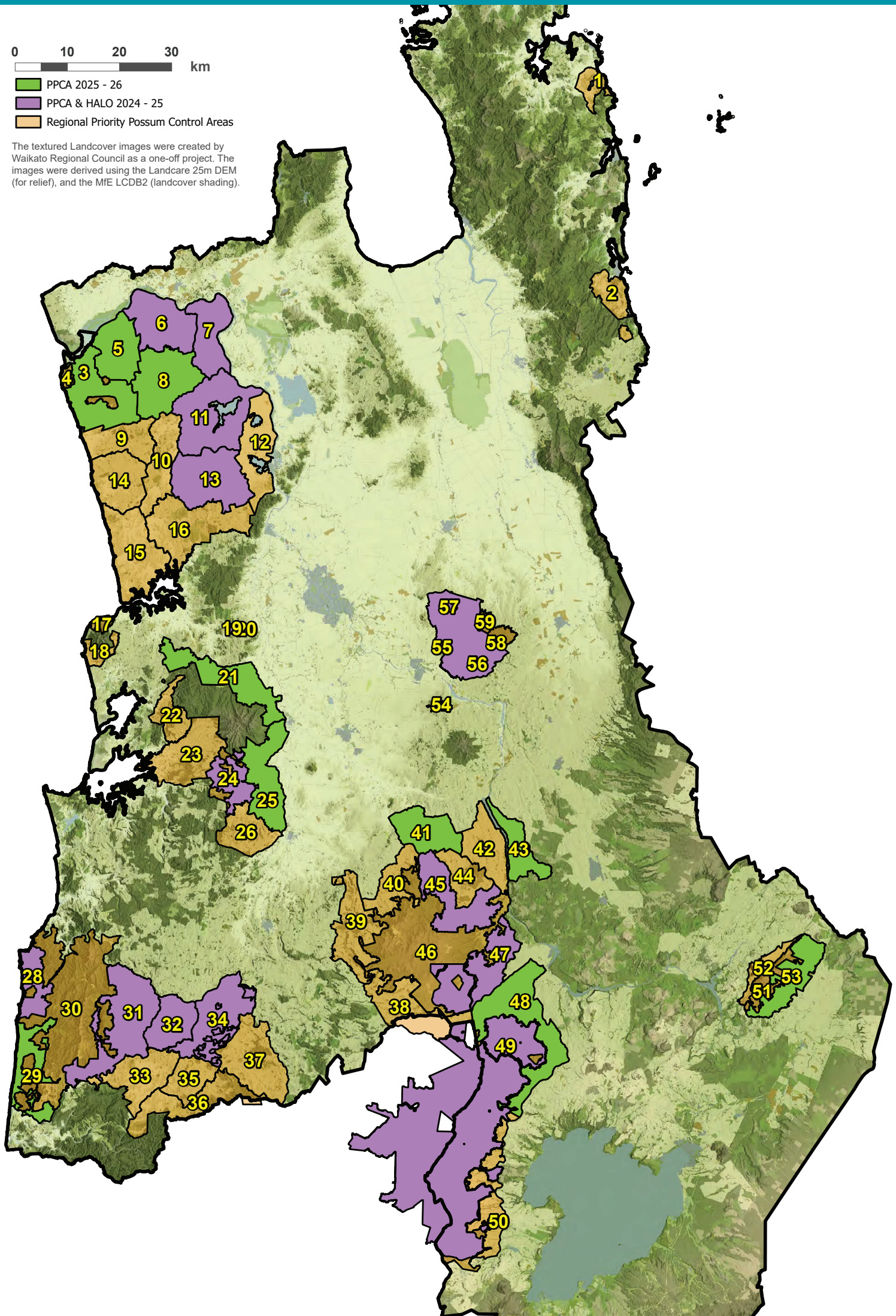
59. Maungakawa Reserve – Hamilton HALO

- Control completed by Ngati Haua and EcoFX in December 2024: 1.28% RTC.
- Potential next operation TBC.

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- PPCA 2025 - 26
- PPCA & HALO 2024 - 25
- Regional Priority Possum Control Areas

The textured Landcover images were created by Waikato Regional Council as a one-off project. The images were derived using the Landcare 25m DEM (for relief), and the MfE LCDB2 (landcover shading).





Meet Gemma Acton

Biosecurity Officer, Pest Animals

I joined Waikato Regional Council (WRC) in January 2024, and since then I've enjoyed getting out and about and discovering more about the mighty Waikato.

I studied at Waikato University, graduating with a MSc in Biological Science. My background is in farming and pest animal/plant control, so I have a strong practical knowledge base which I am putting to good use assisting others with their conservation goals. In my spare time, I enjoy exploring the outdoors with my dogs and competing in equestrian endurance racing.

Automatic Resetting Traps – AT220s Tips and Tricks

With so many AT220s out there working away, below are a few tips and tricks to help you them keep running as efficiently as possible.

- Place a wedge/stick behind the backboard so that the trap tilts forward. This makes it easier for dead rats to fall free of the mechanism when the kill bar reopens.
- Use a perch, rather than a ramp for possum access. Possums still have somewhere to balance and investigate the lure, but it can be placed higher up than a ramp, away from non-target species. Ramps can also be impacted by stock or feral animals.
- Instructions for the manual use of the electronics are handily located on the underside of the trap lid.
- Download the NZAT app, available for Apple and Android, so you can see how many kills the trap is making, how well the sensors are working and check the battery life.



Duncan Watson (NZ Birds Online)

Rooks – we need your eyes and ears!

Council has worked hard to reduce the region's rook population down to less than 20 birds. Our goal is eradication but getting the last few of any pest is always the hardest part!

This is a reminder to all rural landowners to keep an eye out for these sometimes elusive, and very intelligent birds, which can cause significant damage if they feed on crops in flocks. Spring breeding season is nearly upon us and rooks will

begin to congregate in rookeries and start building nests in rural areas. Known rook 'hot spots' in the region include Paeroa, Mangakino, Oruanui, Wairakei and Marotiri.

If you see a rook, please do not undertake control yourself –report your sighting through our website, via 0800 401801 or email rook@waikatoregion.govt.nz.