

Game Animal Council Bill

Submission to the Local Government and Environment
Select Committee

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April 2012



Parliamentary Commissioner
for the **Environment**
Te Kaitiaki Taiao a Te Whare Pāremata

Comment

I welcome the evolution of this bill from the initial discussion document. However I have concerns about its potential to interfere with effective pest control.

As I concluded in my 2010 report, *Evaluating the use of 1080: Predators, poisons and silent forests*, possums, rats, and stoats are destroying our native plants and birds where they are unchecked by pest control. And they are unchecked on the great majority of conservation land.

With this in mind, I am specifically concerned about the Game Animal Council's function to manage herds of national significance. This function may conflict with the Department of Conservation's need to use aerial 1080 to protect native plants and birds given two reasons. First, 1080 can kill some game animals. Second, that some game animals are pests in their own right.

The Bill subjects the Council's management to a set of 'overriding considerations', including the consideration of "*the welfare and management of conservation generally*" (which includes pest management). However, the Council's objectives may still hamper or delay the use of 1080 at an operational level.

This would be extremely unsatisfactory as effective use of 1080 for conservation purposes is often time-critical – such as in the case of rapid responses to "mast events" – the irregular heavy fruiting of native tree species that lead to explosions in rat populations which, in turn, lead to explosions in the populations.

Recommendations

I recommend that:

- **The committee satisfy itself that there is no possibility that the use of 1080 can be prevented or delayed by the Game Animal Council**
- **and that the committee make it explicit in the committee's report to Parliament that the use of aerial 1080 for conservation purposes overrides any herd management objective the Game Animal Council may have.**

I do not wish to appear before the Committee.