Flora & Fauna of Aotearoa, Incorporated Society 2735472
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For Immediate Release: New Zealand Government 1080 Poison Tests Flawed

The New Zealand Department of Conservation (DoC) instructs their laboratories to use an inadequate testing method when addressing cases of poisoning. Decades of incidents of potential contamination, as well as occupational monitoring, are now called into question.

Last Friday, two New Zealand non-profit environmental groups released independent laboratory test results that indicated traces of highly toxic Sodium Fluoroacetate (1080) poison were found in samples of dead wildlife. Hundreds of carcasses were collected by volunteers from a beach in Westport, New Zealand, earlier this month, after torrential rain had caused the Buller river to flood. One week prior, a regular aerial 1080 poison operation had been carried out by DoC, 140 kms upstream.

Independent tests are essential because only Government-funded laboratories are accredited with authority to undertake 1080 poison testing. It is rare when such testing takes place. When testing of wildlife or human cases of poisoning *are* undertaken, the standard instruction from DoC is to use a testing methodology based on a publication 35 years out-of-date[1]. This method ONLY tests for fluoroacetate, not for the toxic metabolites such as fluorocitrate.

New Zealand's University of Canterbury toxicologist Professor Ian Shaw said he is curious at this. The 1080 poison fluoroacetate causes a reaction in the body that creates fluorocitrate.

"If you've been poisoned with 1080 you would have high levels of fluorocitrate in your body, particularly your blood. That's extremely well known. [but] [w]ithout being part of the decision-making process," Shaw said, "it's hard to know why the DoC tests were only done for 1080, not fluorocitrate."[2]

Clean Green New Zealand and Flora and Fauna of Aotearoa are continuing independent testing of samples. The bones of some of the species were tested; no traces of 1080 poison were found. This was expected because effects of 1080 poison on bone take time to develop. However, once absorbed into bone the toxin can remain there after death[3], presenting a serious risk for other wildlife and dogs.

Other tests conducted on the Westport samples showed no abnormal traces of metal pollutants in bones or tissue samples. Neither were there traces found of another commonly-used poison, Brodifacoum[4].

An additional fifteen rats were received by the independent laboratory for testing. However, the condition of these carcasses was poor; analysis was impossible. Evidence suggested the rats had been predated on by birds. It is likely these birds, like the weka and shearwaters which tested positive for 1080, would have also died, due to the risks from secondary poisoning.

Clean Green New Zealand and Flora and Fauna of Aotearoa want an open and transparent dialogue about the Government poison testing policies. They call for aerial 1080 poison operations to be stopped to protect public health and prevent further harm to wildlife.

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[1] Savarie, P. (1984) Toxic Characteristics of Fluorocitrate, the toxic metabolite of compound 1080. *Proceedings of the Eleventh Vertebrate Pest Conference*. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/vpc11/33/.

[2] https://www.newsroom.co.nz/@greenroom/2019/11/22/913505/what-killed-the-westport-rats

[3] Eason, CT, Ross, J. & Miller, A (2013) Secondary poisoning risks from 1080-poisoned carcasses and risk of trophic transfer—a review, *New Zealand Journal of Zoology*, 40:3, 217-225, DOI: 10.1080/03014223.2012.740488

[4] Redacted reports of the tests are available on the website of Flora and Fauna of Aotearoa.

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Note to Journalists: Sodium Monofluoroacetate (Compound 1080) is a highly toxic, inhumane, synthetic metabolic poison. It has no antidote. It is unlicensed in many countries. The sublethal effects of the poison on humans are largely unknown (other than some deductions from animal models, accidental poisonings and suicide attempts). 1080 is a proven endocrine disruptor and impacts upon the body's major organs. It is manufactured in the USA by Tull Chemicals and transported to New Zealand's two Government-owned poison bait factories, where it is stored in a watery solution before being mixed with cereal or other substances perceived to be attractive to 'pest' species (e.g. rats and possums). Tonnes of poison baits are regularly and systematically distributed via helicopters over thousands of hectares of New Zealand's land and waterways – including drinking water catchments. For over 65 years of this practice New Zealanders have voiced their increasing concern about the negative impact of this indiscriminate poisoning, not only on wildlife, but domestic animals and humans too, from contamination of the food chain. Clean Green New Zealand and Flora and Fauna of Aotearoa are collating and recording evidence of the inevitable regular unintended consequences of these poisoning operations. To date, there has been no independent studies of the claimed safety or 'effectiveness' of this policy and no epidemiological research has been undertaken.