



19-E-0604/docCM 6069612

24 September 2019

Claire Ogilwy

fyi-request-9657-619e9232@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Ms Ogilwy

Thank you for your Official Information Act to the request to the Department of Conservation, dated June 10 2019. You have asked:

Can you please confirm who updates the DOC Vertebrate Pesticide Residue Register and why against sample 20446 for the Whio found on the bank of the Wangapeka river DOC has the following comment recorded "1080 wasn't detected in the muscle tissue; bird was almost certainly predated by a stoat or feral cat" when this is Wildbase's conclusion "The diagnosis was "Unknown cause of death. Extensive scavenging, possibly avian", with the comment that "There was no evidence of bruising to the head but since most of the neck was missing, we can't completely exclude the possibility of a mustelid (or feline) predation".

What evidence do you have to get to this conclusion.

Do you test for DNA from predation wounds?

What is on the VPRD now for sample 20446 against the comments, and when was it changed.

We were first made aware of this request through an enquiry from the office of the Ombudsman on 28 August 2019, about a complaint you made that we had not answered your questions on the FYI.org website. The Department has no record of receiving this request from FYI. Please note that FYI does not automatically forward requests that are appended to an earlier response, as was the case here. We are sorry that your request was missed, however it is not the Department's responsibility to monitor the FYI.org website.

Context for your request:

Your request related to information given in a previous OIA 19-E-0123, in which you had asked for an updated version of the Department's Vertebrate Pesticide Residue Database (VPRD). As we noted in that response, the purpose of the database is solely for internal reference by department scientists and field staff. The database is not intended to be interpreted by laypersons and care needs to be taken in drawing any inference or conclusion from the data. The VPRD records are not a legal requirement for our vertebrate pesticide operations. Our decision about whether to test for pesticide residues

is based on whether the data will fill gaps in our scientific knowledge and understanding. This is especially important if threatened species are found dead in areas where vertebrate pesticides have been used, as was the case with this whio.

In answer to your questions

Can you please confirm who updates the DOC Vertebrate Pesticide Residue Register.

A DOC Technical Advisor is currently responsible for updating the Vertebrate Pesticide Residue Database.

What evidence do you have to get to this conclusion.

If pesticide residues have not been detected in the carcass, the Vertebrate Pesticide Residue Database records the most likely explanation for the death of the animal. In the case you refer to, our conclusion was based on the environment in which the bird was found, the expert knowledge of DOC rangers who retrieved it and the results of the necropsy.

Do you test for DNA from predation wounds?

Yes, but only if definitive proof of the predator identity is required; for instance, if we need to discover which dogs have attacked kiwi. Testing for predator DNA is not always feasible. It depends on there being some saliva or other DNA at the site where the sample is taken. It is difficult to find this, particularly if the predated animal has been found in the field, where saliva samples may have been washed off by rain or river water.

What is on the VPRD now for sample 20446 against the comments, and when was it changed.

The entry has not been changed.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and enclosed documents will be published on the Department's website.

Yours sincerely



Amber Bill
Director, Threats – Biodiversity Group
for Director General