



Winter 2024 newsletter

Recently I set out to visit an elderly relative south of Auckland, it was a slow wintry drive on a dreary sort of day. This gave me time to look around and think about the time of year and what is happening out in the natural world. I saw a couple of just born calves and a few early lambs, blossom was coming out on prunus and some fruit trees. Daffodils and magnolias were adding lots of colour.

Citrus trees were laden with fruit in every garden and on my arrival at destination, a mandarin was fully laden and signs of those fruit being gobbled up by bird, rat, and possum. Who can blame them – what else is there to eat at this time of year? At home tuis and silvereyes are enjoying the camellia blossoms, kereru are in a nearby puriri tree, and rats are eating macadamia nuts. They're all trying to keep condition on for the upcoming breeding season.

We, at Pest Free Warkworth, want to tilt this scenario in favour of native species and not those damn rats, mice, possums and stoats. Many of our Warkworth residents have been given free tunnel traps for rats and mice, larger traps for stoats and “flipping timmies” for catching possums. We are therefore in a good position to deal with these destructive pests.

There are fewer food sources occurring naturally during winter so it is a good time to get out our traps, clean them up and service them and load them with fresh food to catch hungry pests. If we can reduce their numbers before they start breeding it will help our own native birds, lizards, frogs and insects to successfully raise their young.

A number of wonderful volunteers service various traplines in Reserves and bush areas around the township. I look after a few small ones near where I live. Perseverance finally paid off recently when 2 traps which had caught nothing finally paid dividends – 1 fat rat and 1 stoat. As mentioned now is a good time to put out food for hungry pests and I think that is why my traps suddenly were of interest.

If you use baits, Auckland Council has done research into their effective use. Their recommendations are not to use baits year round and not to just throw it out in corners and ceiling cavities. They reason that this invites pests to take the bait away and hoard it. When they come to eat it later, it has probably gone mouldy and will be unpalatable, then wasted. Council suggests using a bait station to dispense baits in. There are models commercially available but also a simple one can be made from a 2 litre ice cream container. Cut a couple of holes in the sides of the container opposite each other to provide a run through line of sight. Next gently nail it to a post or piece of wood leaving most of the nail protruding. Push the bait onto the nails and close the lid. You now have a safe baited box. The rat, mouse or stoat has to get inside the container to eat the bait and can't take it away. This also stops bird, cat or dog eating the bait.

The Council suggests using the “pulse” method for using baits. Pulses are used to provide bait 4 times a year; August, November, January and April. Start baiting on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month – say August 1 – load the bait stations with 4 baits and put it in position. (Beside a wall, compost bin, rock wall or wood pile)

On August 5<sup>th</sup> – check and reload the bait station

August 14<sup>th</sup> – check and reload it. Do that again on August 17<sup>th</sup> if baits are still being taken.

On August 30<sup>th</sup> – finish the pulse by removing the baits and rest until a new pulse starts on November 1.

Pest Free Warkworth has asked me to get as many trapping devices out in the community backyards as possible. If you, friends or family need a trap and the property is inside the Warkworth area on this map, then please **contact me by email** [traps@pestfreewarkworth.org.nz](mailto:traps@pestfreewarkworth.org.nz) and I will come and discuss how we can best help.

Also, if you happen to see evidence of rats, stoats or possums in your neighbourhood, please let us know and we will try to get a trap in position there.

**PEST FREE WARKWORTH**

**Where we operate ...**

**Our goal ...**

- At least one in five households in urban Warkworth to be part of the Pest Free Warkworth project.
- Urban Warkworth to be completely pest free by 2050.

**Get involved ...**

- Talk to us about getting traps for your property.
- Volunteer to monitor a trapline.
- Sign up to our newsletters (scan the QR code to visit our website).

**Mai i ngā mahi iti ka puta he hua nui**  
*From small actions come big results*

Logos for Auckland Council, Environment Canterbury, and Pest Free Warkworth are visible in the bottom right corner.

If you live outside the map area there are probably sister organisations who can help. Contact us and we may be able to help suggest an organisation in your area.

Funding grants for environmental organisations such as ours have been drastically cut recently so we also appeal to you that if you have a trap and tunnel but aren't using it then let us know and we will pick them up and use them elsewhere. Also if the traps are old and rusty and not snapping shut we can replace them.

Pest Free Warkworth did receive a grant from Auckland Council recently to assist with a halo project. A “halo project” is a term being used to put a ring around an area to stop pests coming in or going out. Our halo project works along the outer line of the above map to protect the township. We have spent some time recently along Kaipara Flats Rd, Phillips Rd and Carran Rd to determine the number of pests and a means of dealing with them effectively. This line is designed to help protect the Dome Forest. The Forest Bridge Trust has been doing similar work along Goatley Rd. They are attempting to provide a safety corridor for native species to travel from the Kaipara to the Mahurangi harbours.

To determine the number of pests and where it may be prudent to apply trapping pressure, Pest Free Warkworth supplied residents with tracking tunnels and inkpad inserts. A small amount of food is put on the insert and whatever is enticed into the tunnels leaves its footprints behind. There is a very good website provided by the tracking card supplier which describes various possible footprints. If you are interested in using this system please get in touch and Pest Free Warkworth will come and assist. The website if you are interested in learning more is [gotchatraps.co.nz](http://gotchatraps.co.nz)

Another recent initiative in our local area is to co-ordinate all the local groups working in Mahurangi to protect the Mahurangi East Peninsula. Many volunteers in several organisations are all working hard to make the pest free peninsula more than just dream. Snells Beach has a large number of households participating in trapping programs and many volunteer hours are spent trapping pests in the reserves such as Goodalls, Te Whau walkway and Snells Beach coastal areas. It is hoped these efforts will produce a pinchpoint to stop predators or food competitors from moving north to south along the Peninsula.

A recent survey on the Peninsula happily showed fewer possums than expected, no doubt as a result of all the work done by volunteer and backyard trappers. The Pest Free Warkworth group of trapline volunteers have been working hard in our own reserves to reduce pest numbers. Kowhai Park, in particular, has benefited from considerable trapping hours with good results 410 pests caught in the last 12 months. More than half were rats but also other nasties such as possums, stoats and weasels. A new trapline on the riverside opposite the town has also had phenomenal success. In just its first 8 months it has dealt with 155 rats and 20 possums. Well done to both you volunteer trappers and your teams.

Our organisation is nothing without your support. Please do something positive to make all our efforts count. We believe that if everybody does something positive Predator Free 2050 could be a reality.