



2021 TBFREE PEST CONTROL OPERATIONAL CONSULTATION

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Position and organisation: Secretary - Central North Island Sika Foundation

Area of interest (farmer, hunter, etc): Hunting Interest Group representing up to 20,000 deer hunters who target Sika annually.

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What is the primary subject of your submission?

- Timings of proposed operations ✓
- Rationale for operations ✓
- Impact on business activity ✓
- General operational concerns ✓ (*Loss of hunting opportunity, Risk to dogs, by-kill of deer*)
- Operational methods ✓
- Other (please state): Deer survey work, more use of sentinel pigs

Feedback:

This submission relates to issues on a range of operational proposals by OSPRI within the publically accessible Sika range scheduled for the 2021 calendar year, as outlined in your 2020 Consultation Document. These operations include:

- Kaipo
- Tutaekuri-Mohaka
- Hatepe 3

Overview: OSPRI has treated much of the Sika range over the last two decades and will continue to target this area for some time in the future as part of their TB eradication strategy. While Sika hunters do not want to see TB in wild deer herds and support the eradication of the disease, OSPRI operations can have significant impact on Sika hunting activity. These impacts, and potential mitigation strategies to avoid them, will be articulated in this submission.

2017 saw a number of large operations undertaken in central Nth Is. Sika habitat generating much negative sika hunter feedback. The Sika Foundation, together with other hunter groups and DOC, are always caught in the middle of this conflict. The Foundation has tried to forge a constructive working relationship with both DOC and OSPRI where these operations occur on public hunting lands and have an impact on Sika hunters, to ensure we all better understand each other's needs

"A healthy Sika hunting resource, thriving in resilient natural habitats, valued by Stakeholders"

and aspirations. The Sika Foundation has developed a comprehensive 1080 policy (attached). This submission should be read in conjunction with our 1080 Policy.

The Sika Foundation would like to make the following key points in our submission on the current 2021 OSPRI proposals:

Specific Operations:

1. **Kaipo:** This operation proposes to cover almost two thirds of the more easily accessible parts of the Kaimanawa Recreational Hunting Area - one of the most heavily utilised hunting areas in the country. The Sika Foundation has been undertaking rat and stoat suppression in the Kaipo and Oamau River Valleys to protect Whio for the past two years and disputes the claim that there is a "high possum population". That is not our observation, at all. OSPRI should publish its data in its Operational Plan to ensure transparency over such claims.

Doing this whole area in a single operation will make the area off-limits to sika hunters with dogs for six months or more, depending on operational timing. This will have a significant impact on public land sika hunters - many of whom do not have access to private lands. The Sika Foundation seeks a review of this operation by OSPRI in relation to a range of potential mitigation options that will help limit the impacts of their activities on public land sika hunters:

- seriously consider ground treatment options (traps, Feratox, Feracol) for the Clements Road and Oamaru Hut/Lower Kaipo parts of the area, as has previously been undertaken for both areas;
- if aerial treatment must be used as part of this operation, then consider splitting the operational area over 2 winters so not all the area is taken out in a single operation;
- timing the operation for mid winter - after the rut (pre-feed late June/early July, Toxic late July/early August) and using deer repellent to reduce the deer by-kill.
- using deer repellent on all (pre-feed and toxic) baits to reduce the deer by-kill.

Tutaekuri-Mohaka: This operation proposes to cover almost all of the easily accessible country in the eastern Kaweka Recreational Hunting Area - a hugely significant sika hunting area to Hawkes Bay hunters. Doing this whole area in a single operation will make the area off-limits to sika hunters with dogs for six months or more, depending on operational timing. This will have a significant impact on public land sika hunters - many of whom do not have access to private lands. The Sika Foundation seeks a review of this operation by OSPRI in relation to a range of potential mitigation options that will help limit the impacts of their activities on public land sika hunters:

- seriously consider ground treatment options (traps, Feratox, Feracol) as has previously been successfully undertaken in many parts of this area;

- if aerial treatment must be used as part of this operation, then consider timing the operation for mid winter - after the rut (pre-feed late June/early July, Toxic late July/early August) and using deer repellent on all (pre-feed and toxic) baits to reduce the deer by-kill.

3. Hatepe 3: While this operation is largely private pine plantation, large numbers of sika stags use this area for feeding up over summer and post rut. Significant numbers of Tuwharetoa hunters use this forest to gather kai (pork & venison). The Foundation acknowledges that the decisions on this land are those of the owners/ managers/ administrators, but supports the exploration of ground based possum control techniques that reduce the risk to valuable hunting dogs. If aerial options are to be used, then the Foundation believes the following mitigation should be considered:

- timing this operation in mid winter when the impact on hunters and deer will be minimised;
- use of deer repellent on all (pre-feed and toxic) baits.

Other General Points:

1. The Sika Foundation understands that OSPRI are trying to prove Tb freedom in the Central North Island and the strict criteria required to confirm that. However, OSPRI activity has a huge impact on large numbers of users, including significant numbers of Sika hunters and hunting related businesses. OSPRI must continue to acknowledge, and attempt to better manage, the impacts of its activities on stakeholders through such actions as: choice of methodologies; the timing of operations; and the use of other mitigation techniques. The Foundation would like to continue to work with OSPRI and discuss how future operational plans beyond 2021, could be reviewed to reduce impacts on Sika hunters.
2. More transparency in terms of publishing possum population data for each operational area in OSPRI Annual Operational Plans would help stakeholders understand why operations are required.
3. OSPRI's operational planning is based on a 'presumption' that Tb is present. The Sika Foundation does not believe Tb is actually present in many parts of the central Nth Is. backcountry. The Foundation believes Wildlife Surveys are an important partner to pest management in determining Tb freedom. Surveys provide valuable disease data but also provide additional opportunity to undertake targeted management of the valued Sika deer resource, to enhance both hunting and conservation outcomes (eg., hind reductions in areas where habitat impact and poor conditioned deer have been identified). The Kaimanawa South Deer Survey 2016-2020 was a good example of such a positive outcome. We seek to see this type of work continued and expanded, and offer our ongoing support in making that happen.

4. Sentinel pigs could also be deployed in far more areas, particularly along Kaimanawa front country sectors (pigs are naturally present) - this would reduce the need for toxin use.

Why are sentinel pigs not being given more consideration?

5. If aerial 1080 bait operations have a sound scientific justification and must occur, the Foundation believes the best time is late June to late August - after the rut, when deer are in winter mode, before spring growth changes deer behaviour and in time for rain to reduce human risk before spring hunting begins in earnest in late October.
6. The Foundation seeks the lowest possible sowing rates, especially in mountain beech forest and manuka where possum numbers are naturally very low anyway.
7. Use of Deer Repellent is also sought on all (pre-feed and toxic) baits wherever aerial 1080 baiting is used on public Sika hunting lands.
8. We continue to note that dog risk after aerial 1080 baiting operations remains for many months after 1080 operations, long after the risk of humans consuming meat harvested in operational areas. Many successful sika hunters use extremely valuable, highly trained dogs as part of their hunting. The Sika Foundation believes there is a need to separate the shorter-term 'human risk' from potential toxin residues in live deer, and the longer term 'risk to dogs' from possum carcasses. These risk periods can differ by many months. We request that all warning signage be reviewed and in future, that two risk dates be posted: one for 'human consumption'; and a second for 'dog safety'. Otherwise, there is far too much confusion for hunters over when to re-enter a hunting ground, safely.

If you have any queries regarding this submission, please do not hesitate to contact me. The Foundation looks forward to meeting, and working with, OSPRI and DOC to achieve win-win outcomes for hunting, conservation and disease management on public conservation land.



Cam Speedy
Secretary
Sika Foundation