



April 2025



Kawau Island multi-species eradication project

Working towards a pest-free Kawau Island

Restoring Native Ecosystems Through Pest Eradication

Auckland Council, in partnership with Ngāti Manuhiri and the Department of Conservation, is collaborating with the Pohutukawa Trust and a specialist consortium led by **Island Conservation** to eradicate wallabies and possums from Kawau Island. The team includes **Pohutukawa Trust, Cornerstone Conservation, Qualmons, Coastal Pest Solutions, and Wildlife Contractors Ltd** — bringing decades of combined experience in island eradications and strong ties to the Kawau community.

What's happening:

Operational timeline

- Site preparation work began in February 2025 to get Kawau Island ready for the wallaby and possum eradication.
- This included setting up infrastructure like a temporary wallaby fence and wildlife camera network, establishing a base, organising equipment and resources and refining the operational plan as required.
- From May 1st, weather dependent, the field team will begin hunting within Historic Mansion House Reserve. Neighbouring landowners and residents will be contacted by Island Conservation in advance of the operation commencing.
- Our main eradication method will be hunting, with the support of trained indicator dogs and thermal drones.
- Subject to permit approval, we anticipate targeted toxin use beginning in June 2025. Targeted toxin use following pre-feeding will be used in discrete localised areas where the monitoring network has revealed there are high numbers of wallabies present. This may include the prior use of rodenticides in bait stations at these locations to prevent interference by possums and rats.
- Residents and landowners will be notified if, when and where toxins are used, and when uneaten baits are removed.

Hunting is the primary approach

- To ensure the hunting effort is as systematic as possible, the island has been divided into blocks with boundaries defined by terrain features such as gullies, roads and ridges.
- Hunters will be assisted by a thermal drone to identify the location of individual animals within each block. Dogs specially trained to detect possums and wallabies will support the operation, identifying sites of interest, helping to detect solitary individuals and confirming absence.

What toxins will be used in areas where wallabies and possums are in high numbers?

- The two toxins registered for use on wallabies are encapsulated cyanide (Feratox) and 1080 cereal pellets/paste or applied to carrots. Both toxins will be used during this project under a public health permit, where conditions are specified to keep people safe.
- Fact sheets for the project are being finalised and will be shared with the community and visitors to the island through the [Conservation Auckland Kawau Island project website](#). We will regularly update these pages over the coming weeks and keep landowners and residents informed through the project newsletters and the Community Forum.

<div>Provisional Operation Timeline</div> <div>May 2025</div> <div><p>Location: South of temporary wallaby fence (block 1).</p><p>Activity: Drone surveys and canine detection teams, along with wildlife camera data, will provide information on wallaby and possum numbers. If numbers are high, pre-feeding with non-toxic pellet baits will begin, followed by hunting. If numbers are low, hunting will begin. From May 1st, weather dependent, the field team will begin hunting within the DOC Reserve. Affected landowners and residents will be contacted by Island Conservation in advance of hunting.</p></div> <div>June to August 2025</div> <div><p>Locations: South of temporary wallaby fence (blocks 1 – 6).</p><p>Activity: Confirming Block 1 is free of possums and wallabies is required before moving through Blocks 2 to 6. The field team will progressively work their way north, hunting towards the fence between Emu Point and Smugglers Cove. Where numbers are high, toxins will also be used.</p></div> <div>Methodology</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primary eradication method will be hunting, with the support of trained indicator dogs and thermal drones.• Targeted toxin use will also be used in discrete localised areas where the monitoring network has revealed there are high numbers of wallabies present.</div>	<p>The map illustrates the layout of Kawau Island, divided into ten numbered hunting blocks. Block 1 is highlighted with a green cross-hatch pattern, indicating it is Public Conservation Land. A red line represents the temporary wallaby fence, which runs along the southern and eastern coasts of the island. Blue arrows indicate the locations of fence gates. The map also shows various properties and surrounding islands, including Pembles Island (Tangaroa) to the northwest and Mokoia Island to the northeast. A legend in the top right corner defines the symbols used: white for Kawau Hunting Blocks, green cross-hatch for Public Conservation Land, white with black outline for Properties, red line for Fence Line, and blue arrows for Fence Gate. A north arrow is located in the top left corner.</p>
--	--

Kawau Island Takes on Argentine Ants: Protecting Native Wildlife from a Tiny but Mighty Threat

As part of its ongoing mission to restore Kawau Island’s ecosystems, the Kawau Island pest-free operation group is tackling one of the world’s most invasive ant species: the **Argentine ant**. While small in size, these ants pose an outsized threat to the island’s native plants, animals, and biodiversity.

Why Argentine Ants Are a Big Problem

Argentine ants (*Linepithema humile*) are aggressive, highly adaptable, and known for forming massive "**super-colonies**" — interconnected networks of nests that work together, allowing their populations to explode. Unlike most ant species, which compete with one another, Argentine ants cooperate across colonies, creating dense infestations that overwhelm ecosystems.

Their impacts are far-reaching:

- **Harm to native wildlife:** They attack and displace native invertebrates, which are critical food sources for birds and lizards.
- **Predation on vulnerable species:** They eat **lizard eggs, bird hatchlings, and even newly born chicks**, putting endangered populations at risk.
- **Disrupting food chains:** They compete with native nectar-feeding birds (e.g., tūī, korimako/bellbirds, and silvereyes) by stealing honeydew and nectar from plants.

Kawau Island’s Fight Against the Invasion

The Kawau Island pest-free team is implementing targeted eradication measures to suppress Argentine ant populations before they cause irreversible damage. Efforts include:

- **Baiting programs** to disrupt super-colonies.
- **Monitoring high-risk areas** to detect and respond to new infestations early.
- **Community engagement, encouraging** residents to report ant sightings and avoid accidentally transporting them. If you want to report, look for someone from our team in the area or send us an email: kawauislandproject@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

How You Can Help

Residents and visitors can play a key role by:

- **Avoiding moving soil or plants** that may carry ants.
- **Reporting ant sightings** to the biosecurity team.
- **Keeping food sealed** to avoid attracting them.

Kawau Island’s Argentine Ant Success

Residents already see results from the recent Argentine ant operations, with thriving gardens and veggies!

Before, many struggled to grow crops like corn due to ant damage. Now, locals report bumper harvests. “We couldn’t grow corn before—now we’ve got heaps!” one resident shared.

The operation’s success means healthier gardens and a boost for native species. Ongoing efforts will keep Kawau on track as a pest-free haven.

April Community Forum Meeting

Register for the next meeting

The next community forum meeting will be held online on Thursday, the 24 April, at 7:30pm. If you would like to attend, please [register in advance](#).

The community forum is an essential part of the project structure that ensures the community has a voice in the project and is involved in the project design. Ideally, it will ensure diverse community voices and perspectives, including businesses, charitable trusts, conservation groups, and residents/ratepayers.

The community forum meetings are held monthly online, and any member of the Kawau Island community is welcome to be a part of the community forum.

[Unsubscribe](#)

