

20-D-00408

s 9(2)(a)
[redacted]
[redacted] xtra.co.nz

Dear s 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 12 March 2020 requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

Advice in the form of formal reports along with emails from MFE directly to Minister Ms Sage as Associate Minister for the Environment on the subject of genetic modification of pest animals such as stoats, ferrets, rabbits, possums, but not limited to the pests as mentioned during her time as Minister

What was the Ministry's last advice to Minister Sage on the subject of the potential of all genetic techniques to reduce /eliminate introduced animal pests into NZ

The date when Minister Sage prohibited further time and study by mfe staff on the potential of genetic modification and or the use of CRISPA technology, along with reason given by Ms Sage for the prohibition along with a copy of the directive

The reason /explanation why such a directive was given by Minister Sage in her directive to MfE staff

How many tonnes of toxic bait is used annually to control target species of animal pests in NZ including urban rat populations.

Your request is refused in full under section 18(e) of the Act as the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist. The Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry) has not provided any formal advice or emails to Minister Sage, as Associate Minister for the Environment, on the subject of genetic modification of pest animals.

Genetic techniques and genetically modified organisms, including the use of CRISPR technology, are primarily regulated under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 (HSNO Act).

Policy under the HSNO Act falls within the portfolio of the Minister for the Environment, Hon David Parker. No directive has been provided to the Ministry that prohibits staff working on genetic modification or the use of CRISPR technology.

Hon Minister Sage's comments about genetic modification and the use of novel genetic techniques, including CRISPR, were made in her capacity as the Minister of Conservation and as the Minister responsible for the delivery of the Predator Free 2050 programme. The Department of Conservation (DOC) is the government agency responsible for facilitating the Predator Free 2050 programme.

Multiple organisations, including DOC, regional councils, and dedicated management agencies (eg TBFree) use toxic baits to control animal pests. The Ministry does not hold data on the annual tonnage of toxins used by these organisations. Information on the use of 1080 is reported annually

by the Environmental Protection Authority and can be found here: <https://www.epa.govt.nz/everyday-environment/1080/>.

You may find the Ministry's response to a request for similar information of interest. The request (19-D-00633) concerns '*genetically modified organisms and technologies for predator/invasive species control*'. Ministry responses to official information requests can be accessed on our [OIA responses page](#).

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Office of the Ombudsman of my decision relating to this request, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found on their website at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

As noted above, due to the public interest in our work the Ministry for the Environment publishes responses to requests for official information on our [OIA responses page](#) shortly after the response has been sent. If you have any queries about this, please feel free to contact our Executive Relations team: ministerials@mfe.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely



Liz Moncrieff
Director, Environment Risk Science

Released under the provision of
the Official Information Act 1982

Released under the provision of
the Official Information Act 1982