



OIAD-340

s 9(2)(a)

Dear s 9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email of 6 July 2022 to the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

*Hello, I am just curious why squirrels are prohibited in New Zealand. It says on your website "...considered very high risk to the New Zealand Environment..." but no detailed information about the reason why each listed organism is prohibited specifically. Would love some more information about squirrels. Looking forward to a reply! Thank you.*

On 11 July 2022, the EPA transferred your request to the Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry) in accordance with section 14(b)(ii) of the Act, as the information you requested is more closely connected with the functions of the Ministry.

The Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 (HSNO Act) regulates organisms that are considered to be new to New Zealand. Listed under Schedule 2 of the HSNO Act are several new organisms that are also prohibited from importation into New Zealand due to the high risk they present to our unique biodiversity and ecosystem.

As you have noted, any American grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis gmelini*) and any red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) is prohibited from importation into New Zealand. According to the CABI Invasive Species Compendium, squirrels can eat buds, flowers, fruits, fungi, some insects and occasionally bird eggs. In addition, during periods of food shortage, squirrels can also strip bark from trees.

Land pests are a serious threat to New Zealand's biodiversity, with invasive mammals being one of the top threats to indigenous flora and fauna. Prohibiting the importation of high-risk organisms, such as squirrels, is one way that we can protect New Zealand's plants, birds, and animals.

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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz).

Please note that 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 Ministerial Services team: [ministerials@mfe.govt.nz](mailto:ministerials@mfe.govt.nz).

Yours sincerely

Glenn Wigley  
Director, Policy and Regulatory