

COMMUNITY PEST CONTROL AREAS 2018-29: TAKAHIWAI HILLS AND FOREST, TAKAHIWAI, TE TAI TOKERAU

Mere Kepa

The Kāinga [whakapapa village] of Takahiwai is located on the northern forest edge of the Takahiwai Hills, Te Tai Tokerau. For the purpose of the *Pest Strategy Takahiwai Hills and Forest 2018-23*, the founding organisation was an informal communion of owners of the farm land on the forest edge. The owners are predominantly Indigenous Māori people who are shared owners of individual properties. The Māori owners share common ancestors.

The *Pest Strategy* was formed in response to the human activity that has led to the intrusion of pest animals and weeds on the landscapes; thus, affecting business, enjoyment, and recreation. The *Pest Strategy* has been an initiative to address the threat to the pastures and the forest, to control pest animals and plants, as well as, to prevent the threat of kauri dieback disease.

THAT BLACK ... DOG KILLER!

Takahiwai Hills and Forest 8 August 2020

I stood in front of the two old cold water tanks
no longer used for purpose waiting. A reminder
of days gone by atop the hill covered in green
pasture snuzzled here and there by feral pigs

from the forest of Mānuka, Kānuka, Puriri, Ponga,
Kauri, Kahikatea and the like. I stood watch over
the country road below waiting for the hunter to
reach the meeting place before entering the forest.

Deep in vomit coloured clay we slogged one sticky
mud loaded footstep after another. Down, down,
down the slippery slope observing here and there
the slick saturated, sodden under story for signs

of feral pigs having wallowed recently in the pools
of buttery coloured water that filled the rutted
track to the back paddock. His veteran eyes
assessed Earth mother expertly and there before

us was the evidence of that black dog killer on
his way westwards to greener pastures. His hairy
pigskin trotters and head mirrored in the mud.
Footprints sturdy and robust on the march westward.



PEST CONTROL.

I am pulling out Ragwort weeds
Scrunch.
I am tugging out Tobacco weeds
Pong.
I am dragging out Wandering Willy too
Non-stop.
I am plucking out young Gorse and Thistles
Ouch.
I am controlling weeds on the farm.

The hunters are culling Wild Pigs
Boom.
They are culling Possums in traps
Whack.
They are culling Weasels and Stoats
Thump.
They are culling Cats, Dogs, and Rats too
Thud.
The hunters are controlling pests in the forest.

Mere Kepa (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6047-8853>) is closely involved in ageing well and environmental projects in the rural community of Takahiwai. She is employed as a research fellow on the *Towards optimising vitality in older adults – Ageing Well in an Outdoor Gym (AWinOG)*, Medical and Health Sciences, School of Population Health, the University of Auckland. She was involved in the NorthTec study, *Whakaora ngaa whenua whaama: Utilising maatauranga Maaori and western science to protect and restore the soil on rural farms in Te Tai Tokerau*, as the community-based researcher and writer. She was a member of the research team that presented at the 2020 Maori Research Symposium held at Otago Polytechnic. She has oversight for the *Community Pest Control Areas 2018-29: Takahiwai Hills and Forest, Takahiwai, Te Tai Tokerau*.

Kepa, Mere & Pirihi Luana. 2018. Pest Strategy, Takahiwai Hills and Forest 2018-2023. Unpublished report prepared for Northland Regional Council's Pest Management Working Party