



Otatara Pestbusters

Annual Report, 20 May 2025.

It has been another year of pretty much “business as usual” activity principally undertaking rodent and possum control in local Reserves and selling pest control supplies to Otatara residents. Additionally, we have provided pest control advice and articles for the Pigeon Post aimed at encouraging new and existing residents to undertake pest control on their own properties.

Ten volunteers regularly undertake animal pest control in all the Invercargill City Council Reserves in Otatara, those being Bowmans Bush, the Parnell Sanctuary, Matua Road Reserve, John Street Reserve, Grant Road Reserve, Taiepa Dune Reserve and of course, the 40 ha Otatara Reserve next to the school. Another two volunteers regularly undertake pest control in the Otatara South Reserve, a 20 ha DoC Reserve at the end of Huruhuru Road. Their collective efforts trapped 30 possums, 139 rats, 17 Hedgehogs, 174 mice, 5 stoats and 1 weasel. Additional about 750 poison baits were laid which would have resulted in the removal of many more rodents.

On the City Council Reserve front, it is satisfying to report that the Landcare Group and the Council have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that more or less formalises the Pest control activities that we have been undertaking to a greater or lesser degree since 2010. From our side, we are hopeful that the MOU will lead to greater Council support while the Council can rest easy that its health and safety expectations will be met.

The Reserve pest control is complemented by the pest control activities of local landowners. Otatara Pestbusters encourages this activity by supplying low cost bait, bait stations, rodent traps and advice to residents. Over the past 15 years, 300 plus Otatara properties have purchased pest control

supplies from Otatara Pestbusters. Realistically some landowners will no longer be doing it, and others will be sourcing their supplies from elsewhere but there is still a solid core of a 100 or so landowners that source supplies from Otatara Pestbusters (70 separate individuals in the last 12 months, the same as last year). All together they purchased approximately 3500 baits, almost 5 times as much bait as that applied by Pestbusters volunteers in the Reserves.

Collectively pest control efforts by Volunteers, Landowners, the Otatara Landcare Group at Bushy Point, the Native Forest Restoration Trust on Oreti Road and the Golf Course continue to ensure that the sights and sounds of native birds are a significant feature of Otatara.

Independent quarterly rodent monitoring by Environment Southland (ES) in past years and in May 2025 indicated that rodent numbers in the Otatara Reserve and Bushy Point are very low. Unfortunately though, Environment Southland is no longer offering this service. The forthcoming ES restructuring may result in changes in this approach, we will just have to wait and see.

ES undertook a one off Possum monitoring over 3 large Otatara Bush areas in February 2025 and got a “zero count”, the first time it has ever got a zero count with their possum monitoring anywhere in Southland. We might have been lucky and we know we still have possums but they must be at fairly low numbers.

Otatara Pestbusters continues to engage with other Pest Control Groups where possible. The Bluff Hill Motupohue Trust has recently lent us an AT520i auto resetting trap complete with AI, a solar panel, an “in built” camera and communications back to a hub in Bluff. This is a leading edge trap which we couldn’t purchase, let alone justify, at this point in time. It will be interesting to monitor its activity as the year progresses.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank our pest control volunteers, some of whom have been doing it since Pestbusters was initiated by Russell Evans some 15 years ago. Continuous pest control can be a wearisome task and enthusiasm can wane over the years, but without their

efforts, the bird and bush life in the Otatara Reserves would be a far cry from what it is now. Thank you.

And finally, it was very pleasing to see the OLG declared winners of the “Environmental Action in the Community” award at the 2024 Environment Southland Community Awards. I like to think that the Otatara Pestbusters were partly responsible for that recognition.

**Dallas Bradley,
Otatara Pestbusters Coordinator.**

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