

# RODENT RESPONSE – UPDATE 2

Wednesday 5 May 2021

## What has happened since Monday?

Since Monday's update, a further 8 rats have been caught in the settlement area, 1 juvenile on Monday morning and a juvenile and an adult female on Monday night. On Tuesday morning a concerted operation near the nursery flushed out and captured the first adult male to date and 4 juveniles, taking the total to 21. DNA analysis should shed light onto the relationships between individuals and give us greater clarity on origins, however, these captures support the growing evidence that this is a relatively recent incursion.

Nui the detection dog (with handler Mark) has been a real star this week, tracking down and identifying a number of rats that were then trapped or captured. Yesterday's operation saw the refinement of what the team are now calling the 'cordon and capture' removal technique, a more proactive approach instigated following rodent detection.

Where a dog has located a hotspot of rodent activity, a temporary cordon of netting fence is erected, collars are taped to tree trunks to prevent climbing, and palm leaves that act as vegetation ladders are removed. Then the rodents are flushed from their cover and caught by (gloved) hand. The field crews and scientific advisors are continually building their expertise and showing outstanding innovation and teamwork in tracking down and removing rats.

Thanks again to all residents who have reported sightings and assisted the response operations by allowing access to your properties. If you have any concerns with property access or would like to report rodent sign or a sighting, please call 6563 2066 or email the Board at [biosecurity@lhib.nsw.gov.au](mailto:biosecurity@lhib.nsw.gov.au)



Figure 1: Nui in action finding rats and the 'cordon and capture' removal method in action

## Ongoing response

Technical experts advise that this is likely to be a longer-term response with a sustained surveillance effort over the coming few months. This will be similar to the last months of the Rodent Eradication Project to ensure no rodents remain on the island. The more rodents that are recovered, means fewer rats remaining and focusses the response on the last hotspots.

## Tracking rodent incursion

There is a growing body of research relating to the movement of individual rodents after they have been reintroduced to rat free islands. Individual rodents can range some distance from their point of entry in a relatively short time. In addition, release experiments have shown that rats are wary of new things and may not interact with kill traps or bait stations when they encounter them.

Whilst all rodent detections have so far been in the main settlement area, a team of NPWS pest control officers joined the surveillance effort on Tuesday to extend the monitoring grid into the adjacent Permanent Park Preserve (PPP). This work is to ensure any rodent straying into the PPP is detected. Dog searches have also commenced in the south of the island.

The NPWS staff are all specialist pest control operation supervisors and will receive comprehensive induction and training before joining the experienced field crews already in action.

## Surveillance tools

The use of conservation dogs along with the whole suite of surveillance tools, in combination, is the best mix to ensure rat detection. Wax tags, chew cards and remote cameras will show signs of rat activity, while special thermal scopes can help find rats both day and night.



Figure 2: Wax tag, chew card, camera trap (with rat circled) and thermal scope



Help us achieve a successful incursion response by reporting any rodent sign or sightings to our **Biosecurity Team on 6563 2066.**

The Lord Howe Island Rodent Eradication Project active phase took place May–November 2019.

### IF YOU SEE A RODENT



- Type (Rat/Mouse)
- Colour
- Location
- Size
- Behaviour
- Direction it was heading



### IF YOU SEE RODENT SIGN

- Droppings
- Gnaw marks
- Rodent noises
- Rodent smell
- Unusual pet behaviour
- Fresh rodent nest