

**MAINLAND ISLAND RESTORATION OPERATION
(MIRO) INC.**

**ERAT Trap Line Operators'
Handbook**

December 2018

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MIRO's Health & Safety Principles for Volunteers

- First and foremost, always be thinking about the safety of yourself and those around you. What are the main hazards and how can you mitigate them?
- If it doesn't feel safe, don't do it! Take your time; think of another way; ask for help if you need it, so that you are always working within your capabilities.
- It is essential that you follow the relevant H&S Guidelines for the task you are undertaking. The Guidelines have been developed over a number of years by experienced people and are reviewed annually.
- Immediately report to a committee member any incident or activity that you think is unsafe. And if you see ways of doing things better and safer, share your thoughts with a committee member so that we can all benefit.
- Make sure nothing you do endangers other users of the East Harbour Regional Park.
- If you're not feeling well that day — don't go!

Remember — at the end of the day, everyone must go home safe!

Handling Dead Animals

- Dead animals may be infected with diseases such as TB, leptospirosis or campylobacter. Use protective gloves at all times when handling the traps and carcasses.
- Dispose of carcasses by bagging them in a plastic bag, tie the top and dispose into the nearest public bin as they are regularly cleared by council staff. You can inform residents that by law you are able to dispose of three pest carcasses a week.
- Ensure that you wash your gloves and clothing and wipe out backpacks after each trip. Keep (well-wrapped) food and water in a separate compartment from carcasses.
- Should you feel unwell after a trap servicing trip, seek medical attention and be sure to tell your doctor that you have been handling pest animal carcasses. The symptoms for TB, leptospirosis and campylobacter are easily accessible on the internet.

Handling Kill Traps with Powerful Springs

MIRO uses DOC200 traps in wooden boxes for stoats, rats and hedgehogs as well as more benign spring traps in tunnels for rats. You must be trained by a designated MIRO trap trainer before using the DOC200 traps because they are strong enough to break fingers and cause lacerations if they go off unexpectedly. Wear your protective gloves in case of disease or infection. We are also using some Goodnature A24 self-resetting traps.

The DOC200 is the most powerful trap that the ERAT Project uses, so treat it with respect. After opening the lid of the box, make the trap safe by putting the safety clip in place, making sure it passes under the kill bar handle (as otherwise it's easy to knock the clip off). Then trigger the trap with a stick so that the safety clip holds the pressure of the kill bar. Better still, instead of using the safety clip, push your square drive screwdriver through the kill bar handle and then down the gap between the DOC200 mechanism and the box. You can then clean the trap and replace the lure. If the DOC200 has caught something, first reset the trap and secure it with the screwdriver or safety clip as explained above. Then, with gloved hands, remove the carcass, clean the trap and replace the lure. The DOC200 has a strong spring, so you may need to use the setting tool to reset the trap. Work within your capabilities—ask for help if you need it. Some setting tools do not work as well as they should—if you cannot fully set the trap with the tool, ask the MIRO Trap Repairer for a replacement that works. Finally, remove the safety clip (or screwdriver) before securing the wooden lid of the box with the screw. If the lid cannot be fastened securely, the trap must be left unset. The following video is a great introduction to using the DOC200:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kABskKb1NzE&index=2&list=PLFVxEmJHAaHpmjDSEI4vETSla2CFeKqT>

The Goodnature A24 stoat and rat trap kills with a gas-powered piston that strikes horizontally at the top of a vertical tunnel that the pest animal has put its head up into. The traps are thus quite safe if you keep your fingers out of the tunnel! On the top of the trap is a lure bottle that screws into the top of the tunnel, so it's possible to put your fingers in that end if you have removed the lure, but your finger will first meet the trigger needle, which will trigger the piston. To test the trap, push the trigger needle gently with a piece of stick rather than your finger. As the traps are gas-powered (with small CO₂ canisters), they are safe if the canister is removed AND THE LAST CHARGE HAS BEEN RELEASED BY TRIGGERING

THE TRAP! Goodnature advise removing the CO₂ cylinder if you are moving the trap, but from our experience this is unnecessary, providing you exercise appropriate care (the trap tunnel is not very accessible when the trap is correctly mounted vertically close to the ground, but is when the trap is unmounted, but it's easy to make it safe with duct tape across the entrance).

Working on or Near Roads in the Eastbourne and Bays Urban Area

Servicing trap lines beside the road around the Bays, especially in the 70km/h zones is probably the highest risk activity in the ERAT project. **It is essential that a Hi Viz vest is worn at all times.** Traps are being installed a little away from blind corners so that there is sufficient visibility to cross safely. If you think visibility is too limited, ask for the trap to be moved. Where there is little or no shoulder, cross to the opposite side of the road to move between traps, then cross back. Do not service these lines when visibility is poor, especially at dusk. Finally, take your time and look (and listen) carefully before crossing. If using a mobile phone to record data, do this before or after crossing, not while you cross!

Roads within the urban area are easier to cross as vehicle speeds are lower and there is less traffic. It is easy to become complacent, however, so be aware of this. Hi Viz should be worn at all times (this also helps to identify you as a trap line operator) and be careful to look before stepping out onto the roadway so that you aren't caught out by quiet vehicles or cyclists.

When servicing traps in public areas where there is cover and vegetation, be aware that people may have used the area as a toilet! Tread carefully and wear appropriate protective footwear.

You should tell someone where you are going and when you are due back. A fully charged mobile phone should be carried and should always have reception. If you are taking any medications (e.g. asthma inhaler), make sure you have them with you. Finally, we do not expect you to service trap lines in adverse weather because cold, wet and windy conditions can be very unpleasant—trap lines can always be done at a later time.

Working on Private Property

Please be aware of people's privacy and work with the resident to place the trap in a position that will not disturb them when you service the trap. If they feel it is not the best site and what they think is the most appropriate site is inconvenient to check often, then encourage them to keep an eye on the trap and alert you straight away when the trap has been triggered. They need to be made aware that you will still be required to check and re-bait the trap monthly, so be sure to keep in regular contact with the residents so they are aware you are still servicing their traps. Leave a note in their letterbox when you re-bait the trap and if you clear a pest out of the trap, include the date, address, pest cleared and your name. If you have any issues with residents or you are at all concerned about something please don't hesitate to contact your coordinator to discuss with them possible solutions.

Reporting Accidents

All notifiable incidents (when the person affected required professional medical attention i.e., beyond 1st Aid), must be communicated to the Reserves Community Ranger or Reserves Asset Manager of the Hutt City Council (see Useful Contacts below) as soon as possible, as the Council is required to communicate these events to Worksafe NZ. All minor accidents including near misses should be reported promptly to the MIRO Health & Safety Coordinator (see Useful Contacts below). Reporting near misses will help us learn from the event and, if necessary, change the way we work to lessen the chance of future accidents.

Trap Maintenance

Traps must be maintained in good condition to remain effective and safe to handle. You will be able to carry out some field repairs, but often replacement is necessary. If you are not confident with field repairs, bring the trap in for servicing by the MIRO trap repairer (see contact list below; leave the trap inside the front gate with a note saying what is wrong and your name and number).

For the DOC200, cleaning the trap is the most important thing, especially around and underneath the treadle. The trap sensitivity adjustment will be checked separately every year or two—this is not straightforward, so if you are unhappy with how the DOC200 mechanism is working the simplest thing is to trigger the trap, unscrew the mechanism and return it to the MIRO trap repairer for readjustment. A common fault with the stainless steel version of the DOC200 is for the treadle not to pop up sufficiently when you are setting the trap, due to the spring being too weak. This adds to the risk in working with the trap, so if cleaning around the treadle does not fix the problem, the mechanism should be brought in for adjustment.

Tips About Lures

For the DOC200s, dried rabbit (Erayz) will be delivered to people servicing DOC200s monthly. Please return the plastic bags to your TLO so that they can be re-used. Baits should be fresh, so remove mouldy baits from the trap before inserting a new one. You can also entice animals by breaking off small bits of the dried rabbit and placing them in the trap entrance. Stoats and rats tend to avoid open spaces, so it is best to place traps beside fences, buildings or other objects. Finally, make sure there is a clear path to the front door.

As an alternative to using peanut butter, soy-based wax can be melted and spooned into the cavity of the Snap-E traps or added to the lure cavity of the DOC200 traps; these are extremely useful to indicate what is taking your bait as you can observe teeth marks that will identify what pests are present. You may wish to do this with the Snap-E traps at home on newspaper and simply swap the traps over monthly. Drizzle a couple of fresh drops over old wax (as long as there is nothing mouldy about it). You may wish to embed things in your wax such as nuts, dried meats, or bacon rind. Be sure to remember hygiene.

Servicing Your Line and Reporting Your Catch

The current recommendation is for the lines to be serviced weekly to begin with until you have the population under control (usually a couple of months). After that you will probably

notice a fall in catch rate that allows you to drop the regularity of checks down to at most monthly (as that is the maximum life of the lure).

If you take a photographic record of your catches and wish to share please try to be subtle about it, a tail beside a trap marker is enough to indicate a catch, feel free to share them on the ERAT Facebook page so we can follow your progress. You may notice positive changes due to there being fewer rodents—please also share this on our page.

You are not required to interact with the chat board or even our Facebook page but we do require that you email a site-by-site report of your catch and observations to the MIRO Trapping Coordinator by the 15th of each month, you will find a link on the MIRO website to a sheet you can print and fill out. You may need to contact the residents in your area who are working their own traps to ask for their monthly catch rates the night before so you can add them to the tally. The catch data is important—it will tell us how well we are doing and identify hotspots where we need to put in more effort.

Please, if you clear another person's traps be sure to let them know trap number or location, pest caught and date.

Useful Contacts

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ERAT Project Manager
MIRO Committee Member

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MIRO Chair and ERAT Steering Group Member

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MIRO is committed to ensuring the health and safety of its members. To help achieve this, the 2015/16 MIRO Committee developed these health and safety guidelines. This version incorporates valuable feedback on earlier versions from a number of MIRO volunteers and the current MIRO Committee, for which we are very grateful.

Appendix 1. Gear List

This is a list of what can be useful on your trap line. Clothing and footwear will depend on the weather and the line, so that is for you to decide. If anything useful is missing, please let us know!

- Rubbish bag for carcasses and old baits—you may use HCC dog poo bags
- Protective gloves
- Stoat lure (dried rabbit or eggs)
- Square drive screwdriver for opening DOC200s
- Safety staple for DOC200s (if you prefer this over square drive)
- DOC200 setting tool, if required
- Cleaning brush
- Hardcover notebook and pencil
- Personal medications
- Charged mobile phone
- **Hi Viz vest!**