



NEW and EFFECTIVE predator-control tool

Boffa Miskell biosecurity consultant Dr Helen Blackie has developed long-life ceramic lures for rats, stoats and possums that remain effective for months, even in extreme weather.

The scent-infused ceramic lures, called Poa uku (entice/pottery), are among three products awarded Predator Free 2050 (PF2050) development contracts that soon will be commercially available.

The lures are non-edible (which is why they are 'lures' and not 'bait') and promise to be a game-changer for control of mustelids, possums and rats.

"The fact that they are non-edible and long-lasting means time and labour costs are reduced, because contractors don't need to go out in the field to re-supply," Helen explains.

"The lures are easy to use and they're not messy, like peanut butter.

They don't go mouldy or degrade; and because they're natural, non-toxic and non-edible, they cannot be consumed by non-target species."

Peanut butter has long been considered the best lure for rats, but Helen says there are even more enticing scents – and that's what the Poa uku lures are infused with. "I can't say what the scents are, but this is the only lure out there with solid science and extensive field trial results behind it," Helen says.

"We came up with a clear winner for rats, and over three months the lures got significantly more attractive — the longer the Poa uku lures were out, the more rats liked them; and at every stage they were substantially more attractive than fresh peanut butter. The same lure works for possums, too."

Mustelids also had a clear preference

for a certain scent, and ferrets had the highest interactions with it after more than three months in the field.

"Fortuitously, one of the mustelid trial scents was hugely popular with rats, possums and hedgehogs," Helen says.

"This random lure had over 1000 rat interactions; three-and-half times more than the peanut butter did. When you're trying to catch pests, that makes a big difference."

"Poa uku lures are a cost-effective and easy-to-use product that actually works," Helen iterates.

"I've been involved with pest control and biosecurity for over 15 years, and the innovations that are coming out now are absolutely game-changing."

Once Auckland comes out of lockdown, the traps will be available via Connovation. **LG**

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