
# Pre-assessment Information

for Kiwi Translocations

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# Pre-assessment information for kiwi translocations

Thank you for being part of the national conservation movement, and for the work you and your group are undertaking. Having kiwi in your area is a huge reward and endorsement for the effort to create safe habitat. This document has been created to help you understand if you are ready for kiwi, and if so, what might be the best way to get them to your project area. Save the Kiwi has a small but highly experienced team who can help you with the next steps - please reach out to us if you have any questions. We hope this guide will help with some initial questions.

## Are you ready for kiwi?

If you are planning to manage kiwi on your site, we suggest you complete the "Are we ready for kiwi" checklist (pages 5 and 6 of this document) and send it to your contact at Save the Kiwi or send to enquiries@savethekiwi.nz. This is the first stage of assessing your site readiness for kiwi. If kiwi are already present on your site, please contact Save the Kiwi to determine whether translocation would be the best option for your site.

Please have a read of the information below before completing the checklist. Once the list has been received by Save the Kiwi, one of our team members will get in touch with you to walk you through the next steps.

Purpose – what do you want to achieve? When deciding whether you want to protect an area for kiwi there are three main considerations to determine if a translocation is really necessary:

1. Are kiwi already present in your area;
2. If yes, what is the most current population estimate;
3. Are kiwi present in neighbouring areas.

The best way to check for kiwi presence is to complete a survey – this can be done by checking for physical evidence (e.g., probing, feathers and footprints); listening for kiwi calls at night; Acoustic Recorder Device sampling and/or completing a dog survey. It is important to note that not finding kiwi sign during a survey does not necessarily mean that there are no kiwi present. The outcomes of these surveys will help determine the need for a translocation and the likeliness of receiving support for permitting etc:

- If kiwi are present in high numbers a translocation is unlikely to be required and/or supported. Ongoing pest control will likely be the best option for management.
- If kiwi numbers are low then there may be a need to supplement the population to increase the long-term genetic sustainability of your local population, therefore translocation may be an option.
- If kiwi are absent from your site but present in neighbouring sites, a translocation may help establish a kiwi population faster especially if they would not get to your site easily on their own.

- If kiwi are absent from your site you may be able to create a corridor between areas which already have kiwi to help genetic mixing of sub-populations. You will need to demonstrate that the habitat is safe and suitable for kiwi. You will also need to consider if a translocation adds benefit to the isolated populations or if natural dispersal from these populations is likely to occur without translocations.
- If kiwi have been locally extinct in the last 50 years, and a translocation is considered, you will need to demonstrate your area is safe and still suitable for kiwi.

All proposed translocations need to clearly identify how the conservation benefit for kiwi weighs up against the risks/ costs of the translocation. In addition, the translocation proposals will be assessed for their protective benefit for kiwi under the Wildlife Act. Whether a translocation of kiwi is required or not, there are still some general points to consider about the suitability of the area and what may need to be done for kiwi to establish, increase and thrive.

## Habitat requirements and size

To be able to build a sustainable kiwi population your site needs to have suitable kiwi habitat and be large enough to sustain a population of around 100 pairs. The minimum required habitat size is around 1,000ha continuous habitat. See Table 1 for average expected territory sizes for different types of kiwi.

*Table 1: Average territory sizes for brown kiwi to inform translocations*

| Taxon | Location | Territory size/pair | Source |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Northland brown Average 10ha** | Waitangi forest | 3-5ha | Colbourne & Kleinpaste Notornis 1981 |
| | Rarewarewa/Hodges Bush | 3-5ha | R Colbourne pers. Observation |
| | Trounson | 6ha | Colbourne & Digby 2016 |
| **Coromandel brown Average 20ha** | Kuaotunu | 25-29ha | Pers. Comm |
| | Port Charles | 15.7ha | Colbourne & Digby 2016 |
| | Moehau | ~50ha | Paddy 2021 |
| **Eastern brown** Average **20ha** | Puketukutuku Peninsula | 15ha | Project estimates |
| | Whinray | 10.6-24ha | Project estimates |
| | Maungataniwha | 15-20ha | Pers comm |
| | Whakatane | 11-15ha | Bridget Palmer pers. comm |
| **Western brown Average 20ha** | Whanganui | 20ha | Colbourne & Digby 2016 |
| | Tongariro Forest | 30-90ha | Miles 1997 |
| | Pouiatoa | 20ha | Pers comm |
| | Aotuia | 11-15ha | Don Ravine pers. comm |

To determine if the site has suitable kiwi habitat there are some important factors to consider:

*Good quality habitat* - For the population to flourish, it is crucial that the habitat provides good quality habitat to allow birds to find shelter and the opportunity to breed. Kiwi like a wide range of habitat types which can include forest (native and exotic), wetlands, scrub and pasture. Food

availability and climate suitability are part of determining if habitat is good for kiwi (e.g., if you are in an area which may get dry during summer there may be a need to look at this as part of the assessment).

*Predator control plans* - a predator control plan and an effective control regime needs to be in place and must cover all threats to kiwi and how these threats will be/are mitigated. You need to be able to demonstrate that the risks posed to kiwi on your site by predators are mitigated successfully and allows the population as a whole to be safe. As well as a proven operational plan in place, you will need to demonstrate adequate checks and balances of the programme, specifically around quality control, results monitoring and data collection. Save the Kiwi can provide advice around this.

*Climate suitability* - to ensure that the site will remain suitable for kiwi long-term it will be beneficial to demonstrate that the conditions are likely to remain suitable for long enough to achieve the desired outcomes of the translocation. One major consideration are drought conditions especially the severity and frequency of these events – it will be useful to track rainfall on your site to determine whether droughts may be an issue for a local kiwi population. In addition, you could also refer to previous climate reports for historical data as well as predictive models for your site (e.g., through regional councils or NIWA). Save the Kiwi can help you get this underway if required.

*Food availability* - an invertebrate study at various times of the year (once for each season) can be used to determine whether the site holds enough food for kiwi throughout the year – this will only be necessary if the habitat is prone to dry periods and/or if kiwi have become locally extinct in the last 50 years. Save the Kiwi can help you get this underway if required.

*Security of the site* - it is imperative that the selected site for translocation is guaranteed to remain committed to kiwi protection (e.g., predator control is ongoing and there is no immediate risk around vegetation clearance which can impact the translocation outcomes).

*Buy-in and support from stakeholders* - this is particularly important if your translocation is to a site where people reside or recreate, as the whole community (landowners, iwi, etc) needs to be onboard to ensure good controls are in place (e.g., dog control).

*Ability for dispersal* - consider how safe kiwi are once they move outside of the boundaries of your site. Is there a predator control buffer around your site? Are you working closely with landowners and recreational users in or around your site etc.

## Threat management

The main priorities for kiwi are the management of stoats, ferrets and dogs as these have the largest impact on kiwi populations. Secondary threats may include cats, rats, pigs, possums and rabbits. Finally, non-predator threats which are important to consider are the risk of habitat loss and vehicle strike. Without any control methods in place, it is likely that only 5% of chicks will survive to breeding age which is insufficient for the population to be sustainable long-term.

If it is determined that a translocation is the best option, you will need to demonstrate that the threat(s) that caused a previous extinction or decline of a population have been identified, removed and/or mitigation is in place. It is recommended that a thorough site assessment is completed to identify any potential risks for the proposed population as well as stipulate how these risks will be mitigated.

*Stoats - toriura*

Stoats will significantly reduce the survivorship of kiwi chicks which in turn impacts on the possible natural recruitment into a population. All sites need a good stoat management programme to protect kiwi chicks and provide a habitat where the population will naturally grow.

*Ferrets - tori hura*

Ferrets are capable of killing kiwi of all life stages. If ferrets are known to be present or within 20km of your site, it is important to adjust your trapping regime to target these larger mustelids as well. If ferrets are currently not known to be present in your site, it is important to keep checks in place to ensure they are surveyed for and can be managed the moment there is evidence of ferret presence.

*Dogs - kurī*

All dogs are capable of killing kiwi and similar to ferrets, they are capable of killing kiwi of all life stages. A dog control plan is needed to protect kiwi on your site and is a requirement if your site is to be determined as suitable for translocation. A dog control plan needs to include options to reduce risk to kiwi and may include options such as Kiwi Avoidance Training (KAT) and other educational dog ownership workshops for the community. Addressing the threat to kiwi from dogs often requires dog owners to change their behaviours, which requires a different approach to the other predators. Save the Kiwi can help with the drafting of dog control plans as well as organize KAT/ community workshops.

According to the draft National Kiwi translocation guidelines (KRG, 2021) a suitable pest control programme based on best practice management of pests and predators must be implemented and monitored on site for at least three years before a site is considered to be safe for kiwi, this is to demonstrate the effectiveness of the trapping programme, allow for fine-tuning of the predator control work, as well as establish the commitment and long-term sustainability of the project. This may be reduced if three-yearly 1080 is in place for the foreseeable future. Alternatively, if you can demonstrate that the resident predator population levels are low enough that they will not impact on the establishment of the translocated population, there may be a consideration to reducing the three-year timeframe as well. If trapping is the main control mechanism it is still recommended that there is a pulse of toxin control every 3 years to help remove trap shy animals.

Save the Kiwi can provide support in helping with the threats which kiwi face on your site. We can support you with a variety of tools and templates to help progress your translocation application.

## Tangata whenua as partners in kiwi recovery

When planning for your translocation, it is important to recognise the significance of such events to iwi/ hapū in their role as kaitiaki over taonga species. It is crucial for discussions around translocations to include iwi (of source and/or recipient sites) early on in the planning process and needs to be of a long-term nature. The gifting of kiwi requires a tono to be laid by the recipient iwi/hapū. It is important to note what the iwi/ hapū expectations are going forward (e.g., what happens to the kiwi in perpetuity? Are they gifted or borrowed?). There may be areas where Save the Kiwi can help with making connections to help start the tono process.

## Post release monitoring/ Long-term monitoring

Post release monitoring is sometimes a requirement for translocations to enable reporting back on/ learning from the success of the translocation/ survivorship of the translocated kiwi. Monitoring will be required for sites where a risk factor has been identified which may result in failure of the translocation (e.g., a trapping regime which differs from Best Practice) and in cases where ferrets are consistently known to be present. Monitoring can be a valuable tool to help increase your understanding of the population you are trying to protect and grow, and to provide for adaptive management opportunities. The duration of the monitoring programme may vary per site – but long-term monitoring may be required to measure population trends at your site.

Various parties will have an interest in the post-release monitoring and the outcomes, and include key stakeholders such as DOC, iwi, local supporters and any other interested parties (e.g., regional councils, neighbouring landowners). It will be valuable to check in with DOC to determine whether post-release monitoring is valuable for your site and how long for. Ongoing site protection and pest control monitoring is also essential to protect an establishing kiwi population. Save the Kiwi can help provide training for kiwi monitoring and kiwi handling for tangata whenua and other community groups.

## Conclusion

Now that you have some information at hand around what is required for kiwi, you are now in a position to complete the pre-assessment checklist on the following 2 pages. All proposed kiwi translocations need to clearly identify how the conservation benefit for kiwi weighs up against the risks/ costs of the translocation, this includes demonstrating that the habitat is safe and suitable for kiwi. The pre-assessment is part of this and once completed can be sent to Save the Kiwi to determine the next steps on your kiwi journey.

## References

Kiwi Recovery Group, 2021. DRAFT National Kiwi Translocation Guidelines, DOC-5999971. Department of Conservation (unpublished).

Kiwi Recovery Group, 2025. DRAFT Invertebrate Assessment Guidelines, DOC (unpublished).

# Pre- Assessment Checklist – Are you ready for Kiwi?

<table>
<tr><td>Site name</td><td>Provide name of the release site in full or Conservation Unit name and number.<br><br></td></tr>
<tr><td>Location</td><td>Provide general location (e.g., South Taranaki, near Eltham), include a grid reference (attach a relevant topographical map showing project boundaries and mark the planned release site).<br><br></td></tr>
<tr><td>Land tenure</td><td>Ownership or statutory land management purpose (i.e., private land, Reserve, Forest Park, National Park etc.)?<br><br>Is the site covered by any conservation covenants (e.g. between Department of Conservation, Queen Elizabeth II National Trust or local authorities) or any other legal land management arrangements.<br><br>Are there any Recommended Areas of Protection (RAP's) or outstanding natural features associated with the site?<br><br>Are there any existing MOU's between landowners, DOC etc.?<br><br></td></tr>
<tr><td>What size is the release area?</td><td>The size of the release site and the surrounding area is a very important factor to consider when deciding on the suitability of a release site.<br><br>Please refer to the table above for minimum size required for release areas. If the block is isolated and there is unlikely to be kiwi dispersal to and from other nearby blocks, at least in the near future, then it is particularly important that the site is large enough for a viable population to establish.<br><br>Consider how many breeding pairs the release site can support and whether the site has the potential to contribute significantly to growing kiwi population numbers (i.e., can the site and surrounding area support 100+ pairs in the long-term)?<br><br>
<table>
<tr><td>Land cover</td><td>Number of Ha</td></tr>
<tr><td>Native forest</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Exotic forest</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Farmland</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Riparian and wetland</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>other e.g., vegetated gully, scattered scrub/manuka</td><td></td></tr>
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| | |
|---|---|
| Is the site close to other suitable areas for kiwi? | Please specify nearest suitable habitat and distance to your site |
| | Yes/ No<br>Nearest habitat:<br>Distance to site: |
| Are there kiwi present on the site or are kiwi on neighbouring properties? | Please specify how this has been determined (e.g., call count monitoring, sightings) including detection rate (e.g., 10 ARD's over 2 weeks = 10 calls)? |
| | Yes/ No Estimated population size:<br>Year of last known kiwi presence:<br>Determined via:<br>Detection rate: |
| How long has the site had pest management, what pests are managed and how? | Please provide a copy of your pest control plan which includes types and numbers of traps in use; trapline locations, catch history, monitoring plans, audit history etc. |
| | Years/ months:<br>Target species:<br>How is data recorded: (e.g., TrapNZ, excel spreadsheet etc.)<br>Secondary toxins used: Yes/ No/ Planned for future<br>Toxin type:<br>Frequency of application: |
| Is there a dog management plan in place? | Please provide a copy of the dog management plan (only required if dogs can access the site and reside in the immediate vicinity). |
| | Yes/ No/ N/A |
| Who is involved in managing the site and is there good stakeholder involvement? | Please also provide letters of support from stakeholders. |
| | Landowners:<br>Iwi/ hapū:<br>DOC:<br>Community groups:<br>Others: |
| General Comments (maximum 200 words) | Please add any additional data that may help determine site readiness |
| | |

Please submit this form to Save the Kiwi and we will get in touch with you for a follow up conversation where we can help determine your next steps.