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New Zealand's Department of Conservation, Pacificvet and Zoetis collaborate to protect endangered birds in New Zealand

Auckland, NZ – September 10, 2024 – With the global spread of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) making headlines around the world, the New Zealand Department of Conservation (DOC) has collaborated with Zoetis Inc., the world's leading animal health company, and Pacificvet, market leaders in the supply of vaccines and veterinary immunology products to the poultry industries in New Zealand and the South Pacific, taking steps to secure the safety of several endangered bird species that call New Zealand home. This world first comprehensive multi-species avian wildlife HPAI vaccination safety and efficacy trial is based upon a [previous collaboration](#) among Zoetis, the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS) and the United States Fish & Wildlife Service [to help protect the endangered California condors](#).

New Zealand has never had HPAI. The Ministry for Primary Industries granted approval for the Poulvac Flufend RG A9733 vaccine from Zoetis, which is not commercially available in New Zealand, to be used in a controlled trial to test its safety and efficacy in a select number of endangered birds. The vaccine contains inactivated (dead) virus that cannot cause a bird flu infection. DOC worked with Pacificvet to trial the vaccine's use in five species – takahē, tūturuatu/shore plover, red-crowned parakeet/kākāriki (as a surrogate for orange-fronted parakeet/kākāriki karaka), kakī/black stilt and kākāpō. The trial began in January 2024 and vaccinations were completed for all five species in May 2024. These species are listed as endangered or critically endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species and are reliant on captive breeding for species' survival. It is not possible to vaccinate all endangered native birds, but it may provide an effective tool to protect species in captivity where the full two doses of vaccine can be given.

The aim of the trial is to assess the safety and efficacy of the vaccine in the five species. The birds are being monitored, and none have shown any adverse reactions to the vaccine. All five

species have shown a positive antibody response to vaccination, and will be tested again shortly to measure the duration of that immunity.

Once the trial is completed, there will be evidence to show how well the vaccine works and how much protection it might provide to these species. Vaccination would then only be used after HPAI has arrived in New Zealand, to ensure the protection is recent and strong.

Zoetis, the manufacturer of the vaccine, has supported the trial through its [Center for Transboundary and Emerging Diseases](#) (CTED), providing technical advice to DOC veterinarians and offering future updates to the vaccine as may be needed.

“Zoetis has a long history of supporting veterinarians working to protect wildlife and endangered species, and through our CTED, we are combating diseases that pose the greatest risk to animals and humans,” said Vanessa Macdonald, General Manager for Zoetis New Zealand. “We are very pleased to have the opportunity to work with the NZ Department of Conservation and Pacificvet to prepare for the possibility of HPAI entering New Zealand. Endangered species are important to protect not only for their vital role within diverse ecosystems, but also for their intrinsic aesthetic and spiritual value,” she added.

Pacificvet Director and Immunologist Kent Deitemeyer added, “Pacificvet is honoured to continue our long-standing relationship with DOC in protecting New Zealand’s native avian species. Pacificvet is proud to donate the vaccine and veterinary testing services through our IANZ-accredited Biopacifica Laboratories for this critical Avian Influenza vaccine trial. With the support of our trusted partners, including Zoetis, this initiative reflects our ongoing commitment to advancing scientific research and safeguarding our unique wildlife.”

Through its Center for Transboundary and Emerging Diseases, Zoetis is watching approximately 200 diseases identified by the WHO as zoonotic, including Avian Influenza, Rabies, Lyme disease, West Nile Virus, and SARS-CoV-2. According to the [World Health Organization](#), at least 75% of emerging infectious diseases have an animal origin, including COVID-19.

About Zoetis

As the world's leading animal health company, Zoetis is driven by a singular purpose: to nurture our world and humankind by advancing care for animals. After innovating ways to predict, prevent, detect, and treat animal illness for more than 70 years, Zoetis continues to stand by those raising and caring for animals worldwide – from veterinarians and pet owners to livestock farmers and ranchers. The company's leading portfolio and pipeline of medicines, vaccines, diagnostics and technologies make a difference in over 100 countries. A Fortune 500 company, Zoetis generated revenue of \$8.5 billion in 2023 with approximately 14,100 employees. For more information, visit www.zoetis.com.

About NZ DOC

The Department of Conservation is the government agency charged with conserving Aotearoa New Zealand's natural and historic heritage. DOC manages public conservation areas over about a third of New Zealand's land area and 4.5 million hectares of water in marine reserves and sanctuaries. Working to protect New Zealand's unique native species and ecosystems, many of which are endangered, is a key focus. For more information, visit www.doc.govt.nz

About Pacificvet

Founded on 1 April 1993 by Kent Deitemeyer and Bruce Graham, Pacificvet Limited has proudly served the poultry industry in New Zealand and the South Pacific for 30 years. Specialising in sophisticated biological products, vaccination programmes, and diagnostic tools, we tailor solutions to meet the unique epidemiological needs of our region. Our Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) approved facility ensures the highest standards of biosecurity and product safety. Driven by a commitment to science and education, Pacificvet collaborates with leading research institutions and wildlife health programmes, supporting both commercial and conservation efforts. For more information, visit www.pacificvet.co.nz

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