

Viewpoint: Is anti-biotechnology New Zealand ready to embrace gene drives to control wasps, possums and other predator pests?

The once-forbidden concept of gene editing for predator control is back on the table after two projects received Government funding.

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Last month, the crown entity responsible for pest control, Predator Free 2050, [announced investment of \\$6.7 million into research projects](#), including \$2.25m to investigate whether recent overseas advances in producing mice of only one sex could be adapted for rats, and \$200,000 to explore stoat breeding genetics, and whether that could be used for control.

In November, it [announced \\$300,000 in funding towards research](#) that could help eradicate possums by spreading genes that reduced fitness, resulting in gradual population decline.

...

[Opportunities Party spokesperson Ben Peters] said the [Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996, or] HSNO Act allowed few opportunities for gene editing research to progress to the development stage, and opportunities were being missed.

He admitted pest control was not the area in which he'd first expected to see progress; there were opportunities for medicine and climate resilience, too.

There was a gap between what was researched, and what was developed for commercial use.

"We know that New Zealand is one of the best countries at generating knowledge," Peters said. "But when it comes to developing that, and getting some return, we're terrible."

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here**](#)