

A GUIDE TO

# Weasel control

## Wee and wily

This guide focuses on weasel control and assumes you're familiar with general predator control practices. For general predator control advice, visit [predatorfreenz.org](http://predatorfreenz.org).



## Understanding weasels

Weasels are hard to detect and even harder to trap – your default trap network probably won't catch many.

While mice are their top pick for a meal, they'll also hunt birds and eggs, insects and lizards. They're fierce enough to kill a rabbit and return it to their den. Weasels aren't as common in New Zealand as stoats, and far less is known about them. If you know weasels are present in your environment, it might be worth working with a professional contractor. Your regional council or local DOC office can help with contractors' details.



### Behaviour insights

- **Mistaken for stoats:** Weasels aren't just small stoats. Their behaviour and habitat is very different. Make sure you're targeting the right species. Find more identification information on the [Predator Free NZ Trust website](http://Predator Free NZ Trust website).
- **Summer boom:** Weasels breed in summer (December, January, February), so increase predator control during these months.
- **Winter lull:** Weasel numbers are low in winter, so this is a great time to pre-feed in unset traps, ahead of turning traps on in spring.
- **Move with mice:** They live in mouse-dense areas such as grasslands. They will also move into areas where you've reduced stoat numbers and mouse numbers are up, so place traps in these areas.
- **Wary of overhead threats:** They don't like things above them, e.g. birds of prey, so camouflage trail cameras.
- **Fast movers:** For monitoring, choose a camera with the fastest trigger speed, and try to 'hold' weasels at one clear spot by creating interest with lures, like pegged-down rabbit meat in a mesh cage.

## Traps: Types, placement and timing

### Recommended trap

The top choice is stainless steel DOC 200, manually calibrated to a trigger weight of 50g and housed in a wooden box.

This weight setting is lower than the default because weasels are lighter than stoats. Find [videos on calibration](#) on the Predator Free NZ Trust website.

### Other trap options

Some groups prefer the DOC 150 as a lighter, cheaper, more compact option. Note that they are harder to set by hand, especially when calibrated to the 50g weight.

**Note:** The exterior mesh entrance for your wooden box should be 60mm x 60mm (based on a 20mm mesh). Get advice from predator control experts in your local area. Caution must be taken with non-target species, especially weka, kiwi, kea and pets.

**A note on live capture traps:** Live capture traps (such as Holden traps) can work, but come with legal and animal welfare obligations. They are best left to contractors.

**Tip:** Calibration of DOC traps is tricky and takes practice. New traps may need frequent adjusting at first.

Avoid double-set traps for weasels because the weight adjustment increases the chance of double-firing.

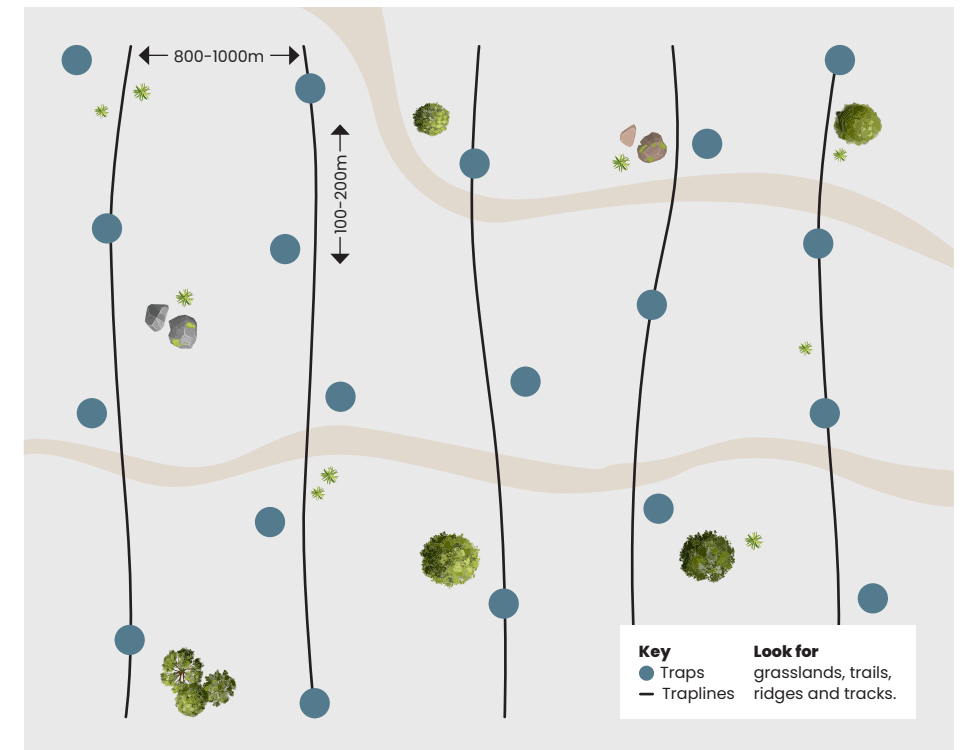


## Trap density and grid

Your trap density and grid will vary based on your goals and capacity.

### Recommended grid

- 800–1000m between traplines
- 100–200m between traps along traplines
- A tighter grid (e.g. 500m x 100m) may be necessary for specific projects, such as mokomoko (lizard) translocation



**Tip!** Even if the catch rate drops, keep the density of your trap grid constant, as weasels can travel long distances.

**Keep an eye on trap performance; move them slightly if your traps aren't catching anything.**

## Trap location and placement

Weasels follow natural lines in the landscape. It's better to pick good natural features than stick to a rigid grid. Wander up to 10–15 metres from the grid to find a good spot. Look for:

- Grasslands with lots of seed
- 'Pad runs', or game trails
- Riversides, creeks, ridges, trails, tracks, spurs, fencelines and contours

### Trap site must-have

Ensure box entrances are clear of grass and debris. Mesh ensures animals can see through the trap and smell the lure. Also be sure to anchor traps firmly to the ground for stability.

## Trap checking frequency

- **High weasel numbers:** Every two weeks
- **Ongoing:** Monthly

### Pay attention

- **Adjust as needed:** Calibrating traps for lighter weights (50g recommended) may require more frequent trap checking and adjusting.
- **Summer ramp up:** Check more often during summer (December – March) when young weasels are dispersing and at vulnerable times for the native wildlife you protect.



**Tip:** Smooth off or fold back any sharp mesh edges at trap entrances. Weasels are fussy — one scratchy encounter and they might not ever come back to a trap.

## Lures: Nice mice

Common meat lures will work for weasels, but they're mainly attracted to mice. Your lure strategy should reflect that.

### Top lures

- Catch mice, attract weasels: Trap mice nearby to lay down tempting scent trails, or place mice traps inside the wooden box behind DOC traps.
- Mayo magic: An automatic dispenser is good for attracting mice, which lures in weasels.
- Place meat lures such as commercial cat food (wet or dry), fresh salmon or rabbit inside your trap box. Use smaller pieces than you would for stoats or weasels.

**Tips:** Weasels will also be drawn to stoat activity, so consider how you might trap stoats nearby as a lure.

Hang the lure up high — a wire mesh bag or nail works well — so the weasel looks up at the bait and not at the trigger plate (they are easily deterred).



**A note on toxins for mustelids:** Most cereal-based toxins rely on weasels eating poisoned rodents (known as 'secondary poisoning'). To target weasels directly, acute toxins delivered in meat lures are required (e.g. PAPP or 1080 in meatballs or new [sausage baits](#)). These are under development.

- Acute toxins require a CSL and are not covered by this guide. We recommend that groups contact a professional contractor for assistance with targeting mustelids using toxins.
- Contact your regional council, local DOC office or PFNZ for a list of contractors. For further information, visit the [Predator Free NZ website](#) for a summary of toxins.

# Notes



A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes on page 7.

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes on page 8.