

# WARRANT HELPS KEEP ISLANDS FREE OF PESTS

BY JEFF COOK

Many of the 30 significant islands in the Hauraki Gulf are now free of possums, rats, mice and other pests, while a few have been lucky enough to escape the burden of an invasion. The islands in the gulf provide a haven for some of New Zealand's most endangered species and enable visitors to enjoy a wildlife experience close to Auckland city. But their increasing popularity and open access increases the risk of them being reinvaded.

A new biosecurity warrant system for commercial vessels and tourism operators doing business in the gulf will help protect the islands from animal pests and weeds.

However, popularity and open access increase the risk of rats, mice, insects (particularly Argentine ants) and weed seeds on boats, gear or clothing undoing the restoration work.

Initiated by the Auckland Council and the Department of Conservation, the warrant is the latest tool in the crusade to keep the islands free of pests.

"Many commercial and charter boats operate out of Auckland and we are keen to see as many as possible commit to obtaining this warrant," says Jeff Cook, the council's biosecurity specialist for the Hauraki Gulf.

"We appreciate companies like Sea Link and Fullers/360 Discovery who are already committed and working through the process to enable them to carry the warrant."

Operators need to ensure:

- biosecurity information is provided on the vessel, website and ticketing
- machinery and equipment being transported is clean and free of pests, seeds and soil before departure
- an adequate number of approved traps and bait stations are set on board the vessel at all times
- rubbish is kept in secure and sealed containers at all times and removed from the vessel on the mainland, and
- an annual inspection is carried out to identify how well they apply the biosecurity measures and communicate biosecurity practices to their customers. Ferry operators should ensure



Jeff Cook, the Auckland Council's biosecurity specialist for the Hauraki Gulf, checks pest surveillance tracking cards at Auckland wharves

passengers check their footwear and gear when travelling to pest-free islands like Tiritiri Matangi, Rangitoto, Motutapu and Motuihe.

Operators who meet the criteria receive a free pest-free warrant for a year, and during this time they may face interim monitoring checks. If an operator fails they will have to pay a fee for the subsequent inspection. Commercial operators committed to keeping the islands pest-free will also do their own checks.

"Keeping the gulf clear of animal pests and weeds is a partnership with authorities and business operators, with each playing an important role," says Cook. "There is a distinct marketing advantage for those who pass the warrant, as they will be highlighted in Treasure Island campaign material."

See [www.treasureislands.co.nz](http://www.treasureislands.co.nz) or contact Jeff Cook, Auckland Council at (09) 624-4926 or email [jeff.cook@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:jeff.cook@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

## Treasure islands

### Check for stowaways

[www.treasureislands.co.nz](http://www.treasureislands.co.nz)  
[www.projectislandsong.co.nz](http://www.projectislandsong.co.nz)

**PLEASE**

CHECK YOUR BOATS AND GEAR FOR RATS, MICE AND ANTS  
 SET BAIT OR TRAPS FOR THESE PESTS  
 REPORT ANY SIGHTINGS TO 0800 DOC HOT (0800 362 468)



Department of  
 Conservation  
 Te Papa Atawhai

