

OIAD-3866

19 April 2024

s9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe s9(2)(a)

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (the Department), received on 6 March 2024, in which you asked:

“With regard to the treatment of native animals held in captivity in NZ.

- *What are the protocols around the treatment of native animals when they die in captivity, such as in zoos and wildlife parks?*
- *Are they returned to iwi? What is the process there? How are they stored?*
- *How many native animals died in captivity in NZ last year, and can we get that broken down into number and species?*
- *How many native animals had to be euthanised last year, and can we get that broken down into number and species?”*

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982.

On 27 March 2024 we wrote to you and asked you to refine your request to the following:

- Wildlife held for public advocacy (zoos, wildlife / fauna parks etc.) which died or were euthanised in the past 12 months (where this information is available or held by the Department).
- Native vertebrates, not including protected fish, held for public advocacy (zoos, wildlife / fauna parks) which died or were euthanised in the past 12 months (where this information is available or held by the Department).

You agreed to this refinement and on 4 April 2024 we extended the timeframe to respond to your request to 19 April 2024 due to the work required to collate the information sought.

Your questions and our responses are listed below.

- 1. What are the protocols around the treatment of native animals when they die in captivity, such as in zoos and wildlife parks?**

An authority under the Wildlife Act 1953 is required to hold captive protected native wildlife. The terms and conditions of the authority set out requirements for such things as record keeping and actions required when wildlife held under that authority die.

When species classified as Threatened or At-Risk die while held under authority on public display, the death must be reported within a time specified in the permit (typically 24-48 hours). The body and history must be forwarded to the Department or elsewhere depending on what the permit specifies. Deaths of other protected animals must be reported annually.

Animals must undergo a necropsy if the cause of death is not apparent e.g., age-related. This is generally done by Wildbase Pathology at Massey University or another authorised veterinary facility. The body needs to be chilled if it can be delivered within 72 hours, or frozen if delivery will take longer. Alternatively, a necropsy may be carried out by a registered veterinarian and the specimen forwarded or disposed of in accordance with special conditions of the permit.

Dead specimens can be disposed of according to approved protocols, (such as onsite burial/incineration, returning them to the Department, offering them to a museum, retaining them for educational purposes / static display, or offering the body or parts to iwi or hapū), or otherwise as directed by the Department.

2. Are they returned to iwi? What is the process there? How are they stored?

The Department engages with iwi and hapū on most applications for holding captive wildlife under the Wildlife Act. At this time, iwi and hapū can request being included in notification and disposal of dead animals and their parts.

Where iwi and hapū have said they want to be notified of deaths, and/or that specific tikanga and protocols be observed, we support enabling this to occur. This may include forwarding the bodies to iwi or specifying the manner and site of disposal as a condition of the permit.

3. How many native animals died in captivity in NZ last year, and can we get that broken down into number and species?

Information held by the Department indicates the number of deaths of captive native animals at zoos, wildlife parks and similar locations was 147 individuals in 2023. See Appendix 1 for further details.

4. How many native animals had to be euthanised last year, and can we get that broken down into number and species?

Euthanasia was noted as cause of death in 15 of the native captive animals reported as deceased in 2023. This is shown in Appendix 1.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Department's website.

If you would like to discuss this response with us, please contact governmentservices@doc.govt.nz.

Nāku noa, nā

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Stacey Wrenn
Director, Regulatory Authorisations

Appendix 1: Reported data held by the Department of Conservation on deaths in 2023 of native animals housed in captivity at zoos, wildlife parks and similar facilities. Total in brackets indicates those cases in that number where euthanasia was reported as the cause of death.

Species		Number	
Amphibians	<i>Leiopelma archeyi</i>	Archeys' frog	3
	<i>Leiopelma hamiltoni</i>	Hamilton's frog	5
	<i>Leiopelma hochstetteri</i>	Hochstetter's frog	1
Reptiles	<i>Cyclodina aenea</i>	Copper skink	1
	<i>Cyclodina alani</i>	Robust skink	1
	<i>Hoplodactylus sp.</i>	Giant gecko	1
	<i>Mokopirirakau granulatus</i>	Forest gecko	9 (1)
	<i>Naultinus elegans</i>	Auckland green gecko	2
	<i>Naultinus grayii</i>	Northland green gecko	2
	<i>Naultinus punctuatus</i>	Wellington green gecko	2
	<i>Naultinus rudis</i>	Rough-scaled gecko	1
	<i>Oligosoma fallai</i>	Falla's skink	2 (1)
	<i>Oligosoma grande</i>	Grand skink	1
	<i>Oligosoma homalonotum</i>	Chevron skink	1
	<i>Oligosoma infrapunctatum</i>	Speckled skink	6
	<i>Sphenodon punctatus</i>	Tuatara	1
	<i>Woodsworthia crysosiretica</i>	Goldstripe gecko	3
	Birds	<i>Anthornis melanura</i>	New Zealand bellbird
<i>Anas chlorotis</i>		Brown teal	3
<i>Anas gracilis</i>		Grey teal	2
<i>Apteryx mantelli</i>		North Island brown kiwi	6 (1)
<i>Callaeas wilsoni</i>		Kokako	1
<i>Cyanoramphus auriceps</i>		Yellow-fronted kākārīki	9
<i>Cyanoramphus malherbi</i>		Orange-fronted kākārīki	7
<i>Cyanoramphus novaezealandiae</i>		Red-crowned kākārīki	17 (2)
<i>Cyanoramphus unicolor</i>		Antipodes green kākārīki	1
<i>Egretta novaehollandiae</i>		White-faced heron	1 (1)
<i>Eudyptula minor</i>		Little penguin	8 (1)
<i>Falco novaeseelandiae</i>		New Zealand falcon	2 (1)
<i>Gallirallus australis</i>		Weka	1
<i>Gallirallus philippensis</i>		Buff-banded rail	3
<i>Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae</i>		New Zealand wood pigeon	8 (3)
<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>		Pied stilt	1
<i>Hymenolaimus malacorhynchos</i>		Blue duck	2
<i>Nestor meridionalis</i>		North Island kākā	3
<i>Nestor notabilis</i>		Kea	1

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<i>Ninox novaeseelandiae</i>	Morepork	3 (3)
<i>Philesturnus rufaster</i>	North Island saddleback	7
<i>Platalea regia</i>	Royal spoonbill	1
<i>Porphyrio mantelli</i>	Takahē	1
<i>Prothemadera novaeseelandiae</i>	Tui	2 (1)
<i>Todiramphus sanctus</i>	Kingfisher	1
Total		147 (15)