

INFO SHEET | PESTS 2

Stoat

Mustela erminea



THE PROBLEM

Otago runholders first introduced stoats to control rabbits in 1883. Populations of native birds were soon devastated. Stoats are carnivores and good climbers, easily reaching nests in tree hollows and feeding on eggs, chicks and adult birds (including kākā), mice, rabbits, hares, lizards and wētā (and other insects). They are active any time of day or night, and need to feed frequently. They hunt by climbing trees, invading nests and investigating every hole or burrow on the ground. They can swim up to 5km to islands in search of food. "The introduction of stoats is one of the worst ecological mistakes made by European colonisers in NZ."¹

HABITAT

Stoats are found anywhere from beaches and dunes to forest and alpine zones. Anywhere they can find enough prey. Around Ōtepoti Dunedin, they are more commonly found in forests. On farms, they move around under vegetation cover, out of sight from kahu/harriers, karearea/falcon, cats and ferrets.

BIOLOGY

Stoats are solitary mammals but have large and overlapping home ranges. Females raise litters of around seven kits annually, and young females are impregnated before they leave the den. Young stoats disperse from their den during summer, up until the end of March, when birds are on the nest and chicks are fledging. They are short-lived with a high metabolic rate. Their population varies widely across the landscape and over time related to food supply.

CONTROL

The Halo Project, on behalf of Predator Free Dunedin, and supported by Predator Free 2050, DCC and ORC, has a stoat control network covering 12,500 ha of wildlife habitat beyond Orokonui Ecosanctuary—from Aramoana to Flagstaff, West Harbour to Waitati, including Kamau Taurua/Quarantine and Goat Islands. Under ORC's pest management strategy, landowners in this area cannot harbour stoats. Stoats are notoriously difficult to control due to their biology. They often steer clear of new objects in their environment, including traps and tracking tunnels. Halo's trap network includes DOC150s, DOC200s and A24 autotraps. Traps also catch weasels and ferrets, however stoats are our primary target.

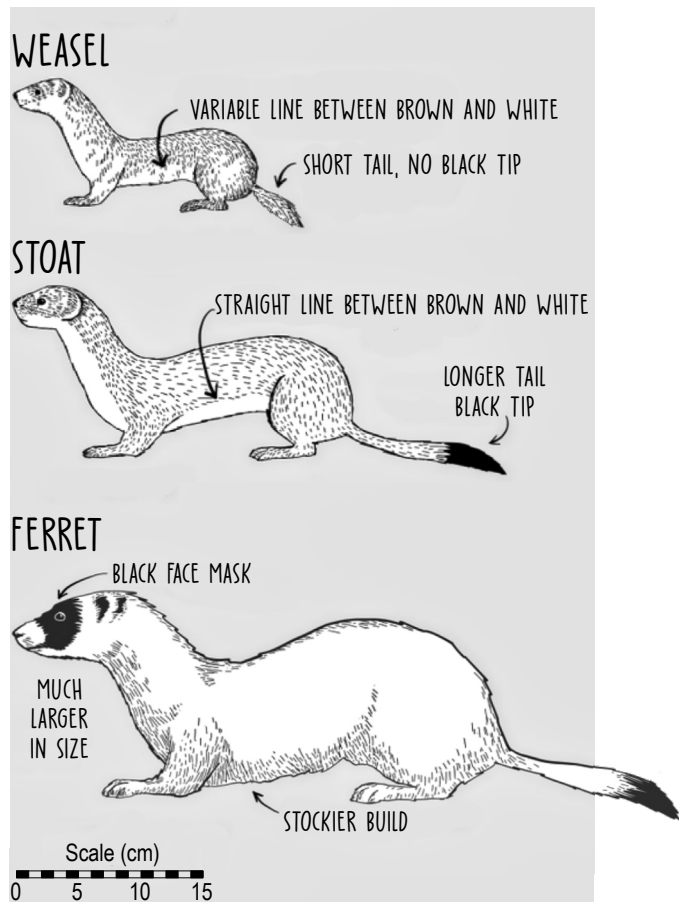
¹ CM King & AJ Veale (2021) *Mustela erminea*. In *The Handbook of New Zealand Mammals*. CM King & DM Forsyth. CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/animal-pests/stoats/
www.orc.govt.nz/plans-policies-reports/regional-plans-and-policies/regional-pest-management-plan



Adult stoat caught in a double DOC200 trap box



Mustelid identification image (adapted from Predator Free NZ)

CONTACT US

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