

Client guide: lizard management

Prepared by: Tonkin & Taylor Ltd

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Purpose of this document

All native lizards are absolutely protected by the Wildlife Act 1953. The Wildlife Act 1953 is separate to the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and can be relevant outside of standard RMA consenting processes. Resource consent requirements may also include lizard management, particularly where adverse effects are impacting lizards or their habitats as determined through an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA).

It is illegal to handle, injure or kill native fauna protected by the Wildlife Act 1953 without a Wildlife Act Authority WAA (permit) from the Department of Conservation (DOC). Both investigative survey and salvage and relocation activities involving lizards can therefore require permit.

In order to process a permit, DOC require detailed information about the project, including project location, species impacted, species abundance and distribution, ecological value, and an assessment of effects of the project works on the identified species. DOC also require efforts to avoid, remedy, minimise, offset and compensate any impacts to protected fauna.

Permit applications require a list of suitably qualified and experienced personnel (ecologists) who will oversee the implementation of the Permit.

The following flow chart has been developed as a guide for navigating projects with native lizards. Note it does not cover every scenario but serves as a high-level guide for the process to manage lizards on projects. This document is a starting point to refer to and prompt conversations with their ecological consultant.

The steps outlined in this document are summarised below. Each step is detailed in full in this guide.



Step 1

Step 1: Engage early - are potential lizard habitats present that could be affected by works?

- Engage lizard ecologist (herpetologist) early to identify potential lizard habitats on the site and associated risks. This may be undertaken by desktop assessment of DOC Herpetofauna/iNaturalist databases or may require a site visit. It is relevant to both greenfield and brownfield sites and habitat can be present even in highly modified settings.
- Lizard habitats are highly variable depending on the species in the local environment. Lizard habitats can include grasslands, urban gardens, shrublands, exotic forest, native forest and in some cases, wetlands.
- If potential habitats are identified, project herpetologist to discuss next steps with client, and likely **go to STEP 2.**



Step 2

Step 2: Undertake lizard surveys

- Consider undertaking lizard surveys to determine the distribution and species of lizards at the site. This information is useful for the permit process, however is not always required depending project context. Project herpetologist and client to discuss risks and opportunities¹. If methods require lizard handling a permit is required.
- Herpetologist to undertake lizard survey during fine weather¹ during **October to April** inclusive (active lizard season)². Note that some monitoring equipment like lizard shelters/Artificial Cover Objects (ACOs) can be deployed in the offseason (i.e. winter) in order to commence lizard survey or salvage immediately in October.
- A relocation site survey is also recommended as this additional information can facilitate the permit process. If native lizard habitat is identified on site and there is likelihood of lizards being present, it is prudent to identify a lizard relocation site nearby so any lizards that may need to be salvaged prior to works commencing can be transferred.
- **If no lizards are recorded** following the survey, typically no further lizard management is required. For some cryptic species or habitats, a survey may not be able to conclusively rule out lizard presence. Discuss with the herpetologist before any survey commences what a result of 'no lizard finds' would mean for future lizard management on the project.
- Where no further lizard management is considered appropriate based on the habitats and survey results, Accidental Discovery Protocols are recommended to manage the accidental discovery of any native lizards during project works. These protocols can be included in the project Ecological Management Plan, outlined in consent conditions, or provided by the project herpetologist.
- If the habitat cannot be surveyed due to circumstances such as H&S or land access restrictions, discuss potential options and risks with a herpetologist.
- **If native lizards are detected, go to STEP 3.**

Side note: If a lizard survey is not undertaken, then there are likely to be timing implications for permit approval. DOC may require extra information during permit processing resulting in delays to programme. We recommend undertaking an initial lizard survey where possible, to inform the permit application.



¹ Fine weather typically includes minimum and maximum temperature requirements (species-specific) and little to no rain.

² Note: T+T holds a Wildlife Act Authority for lizard survey (not salvage) for many regions of New Zealand.

Step 3

Step 4: Develop strategy to manage lizards

Review the results from the survey, including lizard distribution and species composition. Discuss lizard management options and scenario test with the project herpetologist. Discuss where/what/how much lizard management is necessary, and when.

Note that sometimes survey information is not gathered due to various project reasons. A strategy for managing lizards can be developed by working with the project herpetologist.

Lizard management may include:

- Pre-clearance lizard salvage
- Salvage during and after vegetation clearance
- Relocation of salvaged lizards
- Post-relocation monitoring
- Enhancement of the relocation site (typically pest control and habitat enhancement measures)
- Compliance reporting

The scale and type of lizard management required will depend on the nature and impact of the proposed works. If lizard salvage is required, **move to STEP 4.**



Step 4

Step 4 - Documentation

A permit from DOC is required to salvage lizards. Key aspects of a permit include:

- A Lizard Management Plan (LMP) to accompany the permit. The LMP will outline protocols for managing lizards at the site. Note that a LMP is often required as a condition of resource consent, as well as a permit.
- Application can take up to 8 months to be assessed³.
- DOC can request further information if information provided is insufficient.
- DOC charges a fee for the cost of processing the application (usually \$800 + GST, with increasing fees for increased project complexity).
- We recommend having a pre-application meeting with DOC to discuss the project and lizard management strategy - this will accelerate the permit processing time.
- The permit process requires DOC to engage with iwi. A letter of support from iwi can facilitate the permit process.



Step 5

Step 5: Implementation of lizard management

Lizard management to be undertaken in accordance with protocols laid out in permit and LMP, and any consent conditions.

Emergency works considerations

- **Consult a lizard ecologist (herpetologist) as soon as possible.**
- **Level of lizard management depends on the scale of work, lizard habitat availability and available lizard records.**
- **It is recommended to apply for a permit as soon as possible, highlighting that works will be emergency. DOC will triage based on the information provided.**
- **We encourage discussion with DOC. A pre-application meeting with DOC can be organised to discuss potential options.**

³ As of June 2025, DOC is aiming to process 95% of applications within 6 months by the end of 2026.

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