

Date: 23/10/19

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Political Reporter
Newshub

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Via: [REDACTED]@mediaworks.co.nz

Official Information Act Request

Dear [REDACTED],

I refer to your request sent to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) on 8 October 2019, for the following information:

1. Please give a detailed breakdown of the number of times genetically modified organisms have been deliberately or accidentally released into New Zealand, excluding all genetically modified organisms imported into and/or grown/held in containment facilities, since 2009.
2. Please detail what happened and when, and what steps were taken, if any, to contain the GMO.

Your request has been treated as a request for information under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

The information in scope of your request is held both by the EPA and by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). The EPA is responsible for approving genetically modified organisms, and MPI is responsible for compliance management and enforcement relating to those organisms. We do not hold the information regarding deliberately or accidentally released genetically modified organisms.

The EPA has issued seven approvals for the release of five different genetically modified organisms, all of which are medicines or veterinary medicines. Details of the approvals are provided below, with links to the EPA website where you can find more information:

1. Proteqflu – a genetically modified, live-attenuated canarypox virus for use in the vaccination of horses for immediate export from New Zealand. Also under this approval - Proteqflu TE, the canarypox vaccine in combination with a tetanus vaccine. The tetanus vaccine is not genetically modified.
<https://www.epa.govt.nz/database-search/hsno-application-register/view/GMR07001>
2. Pexa-Vec – a genetically modified, live-attenuated vaccinia virus under two release approvals, one for the treatment of hepatocellular carcinoma (a form of liver cancer), and the other for the treatment of renal cell carcinoma (a form of kidney cancer).
<https://www.epa.govt.nz/database-search/hsno-application-register/view/APP202601> (hepatocellular carcinoma)
<https://www.epa.govt.nz/database-search/hsno-application-register/view/APP203530> (renal cell carcinoma).
3. Telomelysin – a genetically modified, live-attenuated human adenovirus-5 strain for the treatment of metastasised, non-resectable melanoma (skin cancer).
<https://www.epa.govt.nz/database-search/hsno-application-register/view/APP202854>

4. IMOJEV – a genetically modified, live attenuated chimaera between two other live-attenuated (non-GMO) viral vaccines: a yellow fever vaccine, and a Japanese encephalitis vaccine, for the vaccination of travellers to Asia against Japanese encephalitis virus.
<https://www.epa.govt.nz/database-search/hsno-application-register/view/APP202371>
5. WZTL-002 cells – genetically modified, autologous (patient-derived) CAR (chimaeric antigen receptor) T-cells for the treatment of certain types of non-Hodgkin lymphoma (blood cancers).
<https://www.epa.govt.nz/database-search/hsno-application-register/view/APP203750>.

We have also transferred your request to MPI, under section 14(b)(ii) of the OIA, so that they can provide you with their response.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review of this decision by the Ombudsman. You can contact the Ombudsman on 0800 802 602, or by email at info@ombudsman.parliament.nz.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact us via ministerials@epa.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely



Gayle Holmes
Acting General Manager Hazardous Substances & New Organisms
Environmental Protection Authority