



NOW DECEASED: Though alive when discovered, this kiwi died after it was trapped in an illegally-set possum trap. Photo supplied

Illegal possum traps killing kiwi

THE death of a kiwi in a possum trap has saddened Eastern Bay Department of Conservation rangers, who have found 90 illegally-set traps in recent weeks.

The kiwi was found trapped but still alive in the Pakihi area, south of Opotiki, by a hunter, who contacted the DoC hotline and delivered the bird to Opotiki.

Ranger Paul Hunter said in spite of the hunter doing all the right things, the seriously dehydrated kiwi later died.

The fatal trap was situated in one of three trap-lines discovered with traps set on the ground in recent weeks.

Another of the trap-lines found by DoC rangers had a number of dead

possums in its leg-hold traps, with one larger trap also being used in the wrong way.

Mr Hunter said that as well as kiwi, weka were common in the areas the traps were found.

He said trappers working on public conservation land must have a permit and were required to set their traps at least 35 centimetres above the ground to limit the chance that ground birds could become caught in them.

Size 1 traps were usually used to ensure possums were held and not mutilated by the trap, although larger size 1.5 traps could be used if they had rubber jaw protectors.

All leg-hold traps were required to be checked daily to meet animal

welfare codes of practice and dead possums were a sure sign the trapper was failing in this obligation, Mr Hunter said.

He said while it was great that people were trying to catch possums for the fur trade and reduce their impact on native bush and birds, these recent breaches of the rules and the death of a kiwi were "really disappointing".

"It is not hard to follow the rules and catch possums without being cruel or killing kiwi and weka.

"It just takes people to be responsible and do the right thing."

All the illegally set traps were removed and follow-up inquiries are ongoing.