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Moki, protector of Pitt

- Last Updated 23 Feb 2024

Moki is a Jack Russell Terrier, and he's a member of the Chatham Islands Council biosecurity team. Moki's mission – to keep Pitt Island rat-free.

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Biosecurity officer Kerri Moir was joined by her sidekick Moki in June 2018. Their working relationship started with a trip to Te Puke so Kerri could complete her Department of Conservation (DOC) interim certification for rodent dog use and handling.

“Moki had already been trained for us, so the training was for my benefit, learning how he behaves while hunting, and how he behaves after he’s found his target species’ scent,” Kerri says.

The training was intensive, covering:

- Obedience training to ensure Moki responds well to commands from Kerri,
- Non-target aversion training to ensure Moki doesn’t pose a threat to native species and domestic animals,
- Avian aversion to ensure Moki isn’t interested in chasing birds, and
- Toxin and trap aversion to ensure Moki is not interested in these, to protect his own health.

Feedback on the training from DOC was positive, noting that the pair worked well together considering their short time together, and that they had the makings of a great team.

“The training took two weeks and was mentally exhausting. But it prepared us well – I was really comfortable working with Moki when we got back home after those two weeks together,” says Kerri.

Since then, Moki has been hard at work inspecting fishing vessels and their surrounds, thanks to the cooperation of fishers, to make sure no stowaway rats make it to Pitt Island.

“Pitt Island and the outer Islands are rat free, but unfortunately Pitt does have mice, so the main objective is to keep rats of all descriptions off Pitt Island. This meant that Moki had to be trained specifically to detect rats, not just rodents in general, so he can differentiate between rats and mice,” says Kerri.

Kerri is enjoying working with her new sidekick, “He is just such a cool wee dog. I’ve always been around bigger dogs so when Moki was given to me I was a bit unsure. But he has the best personality and is such a calm dog.”

“The most challenging thing about working with Moki is that he is so damn cute, and then I let him get away with too much which means he switches off because he thinks he is the boss. But he’s wrong!”

Moki the biosecurity dog



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For any questions about the [Council's biosecurity work](#) contact Kerri Moir on [\(03\) 305 0013](tel:(03) 305 0013).

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