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## ***Survival of femur fractures in wild stoats (Mustela erminea)***

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### **Abstract**

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*Stoats (Mustela erminea) are active hunters and, therefore, one might predict that any broken bones or other injuries impeding active movement would incur a serious risk of starvation. Dead stoats (n = 560) were collected from trappers operating predator control lines in three conservation areas of New Zealand from 1972–1978. Femurs were cleaned and examined for healed injuries and deformities. Five femurs from four stoats (one with both femurs injured) showed traumatic distortions following healing of complete breaks incurred during life. A further case recorded during post-eradication monitoring in 2010 on Rangitoto, an offshore island, is added. These data provide evidence that wild stoats have a remarkable capacity to tolerate catastrophic femur fractures. They can survive long enough, despite the implied limitation to their energetic hunting style, to permit full healing even though the result is a gross distortion of the femoral shaft.*

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**Keywords:** animal welfare, fractures, *Mustela erminea*, stoat, vehicle impacts, wildlife injuries