

Take care visiting the Maximum Security Animal Quarantine Station

The Maximum Security Animal Quarantine Station is a unique building that has played an important role in New Zealand's history. Little change has been made to the interior of the building so that visitors can experience close to what it was like when the Station was operational.

Please take care when walking through the Station. There are uneven floor surfaces—especially in the Hygiene Lock area.



Please do not disturb or remove any fixtures or display items

Consider others

Respect our cultural heritage

Toitu te whenua (Leave the land undisturbed)



Toilets are near the main wharf and behind the Visitor Centre



Drinking water is available in the Visitor Centre



Due to fire hazards and limited water supply, smoking and fires are not allowed.

If you discover a fire, dial 111 and go immediately to the main wharf.

Find out more

Keep a look out for more signs on animal quarantine located inside the Visitor Centre and around Matiu/Somes Island.

Visit www.doc.govt.nz to find out more about animal quarantine and historic heritage on Matiu/Somes Island.

Further reading

Island of Secrets: Matiu/Somes Island in Wellington Harbour, by David McGill.

Visit www.teara.govt.nz to find out more about quarantine in New Zealand.



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Maximum Security Animal Quarantine Station tour

Matiu/Somes Island



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Maximum Security Animal Quarantine Station

New Zealand's strict quarantine precautions have ensured the country has been kept free from serious animal diseases.

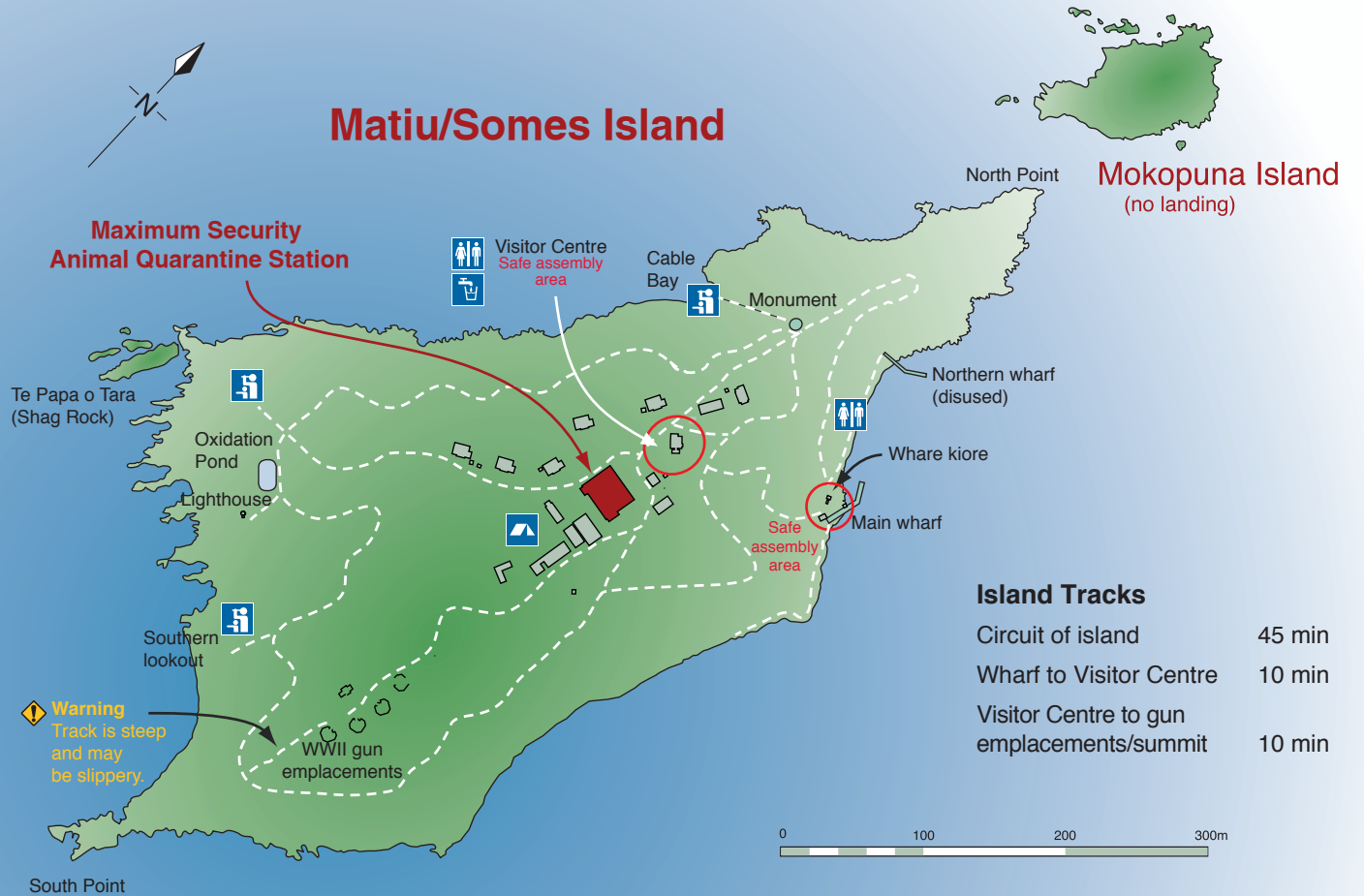
Animals have been quarantined on Matiu/Somes Island officially since 1889, and by 1908, the island was considered New Zealand's principal animal quarantine station.

From 1972 the New Zealand government imported new breeds of livestock from around the world so that scientists could determine the value of their genetic and breeding qualities. Importing these animals into New Zealand required stricter procedures for disease screening, and this is how the Maximum Security Animal Quarantine Station was born.

Matiu/Somes Island was selected over other locations in New Zealand as the site for the Station because it was an island located close to a population centre, in a non-agricultural area, free from feral animals, and small enough to be effectively patrolled and kept under constant surveillance.

Nine staff worked in the Station: one supervising livestock officer, four livestock officers, one electrician, one carpenter, a launch master, and a veterinarian.

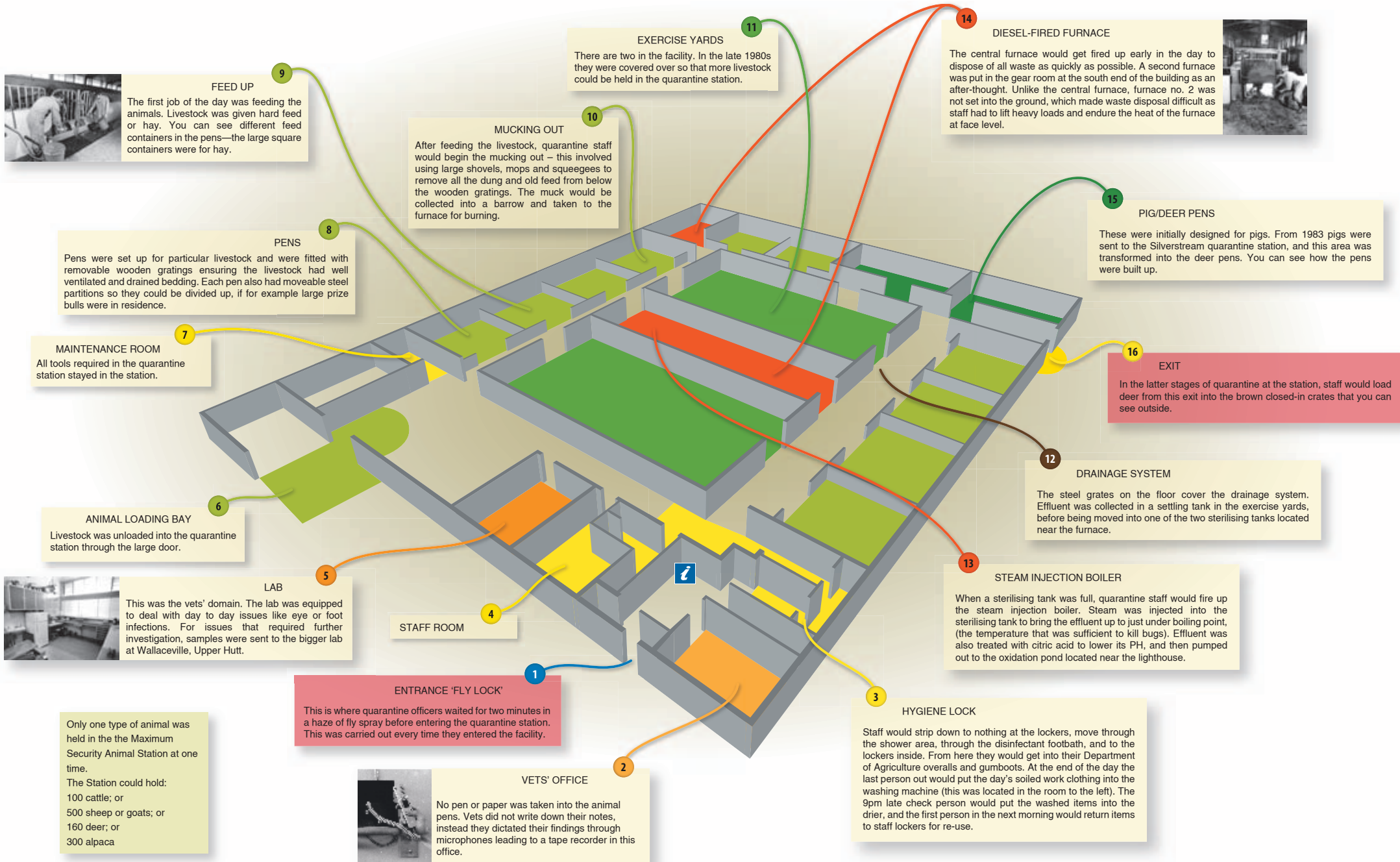
When the Station received its first shipment of animals by helicopter in March 1972, it was the most sophisticated facility of its kind in the world.



Timeline



Welcome to New Zealand's only Maximum Security Animal Quarantine Station



9 FEED UP
The first job of the day was feeding the animals. Livestock was given hard feed or hay. You can see different feed containers in the pens—the large square containers were for hay.



5 LAB
This was the vets' domain. The lab was equipped to deal with day to day issues like eye or foot infections. For issues that required further investigation, samples were sent to the bigger lab at Wallaceville, Upper Hutt.



2 VETS' OFFICE
No pen or paper was taken into the animal pens. Vets did not write down their notes, instead they dictated their findings through microphones leading to a tape recorder in this office.



14 DIESEL-FIRED FURNACE
The central furnace would get fired up early in the day to dispose of all waste as quickly as possible. A second furnace was put in the gear room at the south end of the building as an after-thought. Unlike the central furnace, furnace no. 2 was not set into the ground, which made waste disposal difficult as staff had to lift heavy loads and endure the heat of the furnace at face level.

7 MAINTENANCE ROOM
All tools required in the quarantine station stayed in the station.

16 EXIT
In the latter stages of quarantine at the station, staff would load deer from this exit into the brown closed-in crates that you can see outside.

6 ANIMAL LOADING BAY
Livestock was unloaded into the quarantine station through the large door.

12 DRAINAGE SYSTEM
The steel grates on the floor cover the drainage system. Effluent was collected in a settling tank in the exercise yards, before being moved into one of the two sterilising tanks located near the furnace.

13 STEAM INJECTION BOILER
When a sterilising tank was full, quarantine staff would fire up the steam injection boiler. Steam was injected into the sterilising tank to bring the effluent up to just under boiling point, (the temperature that was sufficient to kill bugs). Effluent was also treated with citric acid to lower its PH, and then pumped out to the oxidation pond located near the lighthouse.

Only one type of animal was held in the the Maximum Security Animal Station at one time.
The Station could hold:
100 cattle; or
500 sheep or goats; or
160 deer; or
300 alpaca

1 ENTRANCE 'FLY LOCK'
This is where quarantine officers waited for two minutes in a haze of fly spray before entering the quarantine station. This was carried out every time they entered the facility.

3 HYGIENE LOCK
Staff would strip down to nothing at the lockers, move through the shower area, through the disinfectant footbath, and to the lockers inside. From here they would get into their Department of Agriculture overalls and gumboots. At the end of the day the last person out would put the day's soiled work clothing into the washing machine (this was located in the room to the left). The 9pm late check person would put the washed items into the drier, and the first person in the next morning would return items to staff lockers for re-use.

15 PIG/DEER PENS
These were initially designed for pigs. From 1983 pigs were sent to the Silverstream quarantine station, and this area was transformed into the deer pens. You can see how the pens were built up.

10 MUCKING OUT
After feeding the livestock, quarantine staff would begin the mucking out – this involved using large shovels, mops and squeegees to remove all the dung and old feed from below the wooden gratings. The muck would be collected into a barrow and taken to the furnace for burning.

11 EXERCISE YARDS
There are two in the facility. In the late 1980s they were covered over so that more livestock could be held in the quarantine station.

8 PENS
Pens were set up for particular livestock and were fitted with removable wooden gratings ensuring the livestock had well ventilated and drained bedding. Each pen also had moveable steel partitions so they could be divided up, if for example large prize bulls were in residence.