

The trouble with wild goats

If you own goats on Banks Peninsula please ensure that your fences are goat-proof or that your goats are well tethered and tagged. That's the important message from the Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust.

The Trust is working with Environment Canterbury, the Department of Conservation, and the Christchurch City Council to rid Banks Peninsula of feral goats. Feral or wild goats are those that are not held behind a fence, or have no recognized visual identification. The goats are on Banks Peninsula's most wanted list because several plants unique to the peninsula are now at risk of extinction because of them.

Goats can severely damage forests by eating young trees and strip bark from older ones. They open up light gaps where weeds invade. The loss of vegetation can increase erosion and decrease water quality. Feral goats may also carry footrot and lice.

To be effective for gorse control, goats need to be kept at high numbers (20 per ha) between very good fences. For weed control, the Trust suggests you consider using sheep or other animals, or other methods like herbicide.

The Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust is asking people to report goat sightings as soon as possible to: David Hunter, Target Pest Enterprises, phone: 03 325 1103, 03 325 1215 (direct dial) or 0274 374 4743.

Goat-proofing

The best goat-proof fence is one made from deer fence netting that is well secured at ground level. If you are unable to do this the minimum standards are:

- a standard nine wire high tensile fence
- six posts per 20 metres of fence line
- a maximum spacing between battens of 1 m
- electrified wires at 30 cm, 60 cm and 120 cm

Ensure that the stays and angle strainers are not on the goat's side of the fence (goats are agile enough to climb these bits).

"Squash and sniff" - to identify Argentine ant

Christchurch residents are being asked to keep an eye out for the highly invasive Argentine Ant, but the Department of Conservation is asking people not to control them by themselves. Argentine Ants are a light to dark honey brown colour and 2-3mm long. Unlike the Darwin's Ant, they do not smell when squashed. Department of Conservation staff ask that Christchurch residents to perform the "squash and sniff" test before ringing them with suspected sightings.

If ants are seen travelling in multiple lines rather than single file and they do not have a distinctive smell when squashed, they are likely to be Argentine Ants. Darwin's Ants can be treated with a variety of ant baits but Argentine Ants disperse and multiply more rapidly when exposed to most insecticides. Environment Canterbury and the Christchurch City Council are working with the Department of Conservation to eradicate known colonies of the ant.

To report any sightings please phone the Department of Conservation on 03 379 9758.

Pest management people at Environment Canterbury

Pest Portfolio Chairman: Cr Robert Johnston, phone 03 312 4166, fax 03 312 3085. Robert is also a member of the Regional Animal Health Advisory Committee and a director of Target Pest Enterprises.

Portfolio Manager, Biosecurity / Pest Management: Rob Phillips is responsible for co-ordinating overall portfolio activities including advising Council and ensuring the achievement of outputs and outcomes.

Bovine Tb:

Kevin Gallagher is the Bovine Tb and Contracts Manager. He is responsible for managing the Tb vector control programme as part of the national pest management strategy within Canterbury. He is based at the Christchurch office, 03 353 9009 extn 7320.

Biosecurity Manager:

Responsible for implementing the regional pest management strategy. The new Biosecurity Manager is Graham Sullivan. Phone 03 688 9069 extn 8835.

The biosecurity section is organised into three teams:

The Northern Area Team Leader is Laurence Smith in Amberley. Amberley Biosecurity Officers are Terry Charles, Lance Smith, Peter Morgan and Jan Crooks, 03 314 8014.

Cheviot Biosecurity Officers are Noel Crump and Tom Kirkwood, 03 319 8614.

The Kaikoura Biosecurity Officer is Peter Adams (duties combined with river engineering), 03 319 5781.

The Central Area Team Leader is Rob McCaw in Christchurch.

Christchurch Biosecurity Officers are Jenny Williams, Stephen Brown and John Thacker, 03 365 3828.

The Darfield Biosecurity Officer is Errol Barnes, 03 318 8155.

The Little River Biosecurity Officer is Jock Bulman, 03 325 1103.

The Southern Area Team Leader in Timaru is Brent Glentworth. Timaru Biosecurity Officers are Phil Crotty, Terry Broughton and Bridget Keenan, 03 688 9069.

Target Pest Enterprises Ltd is an Environment Canterbury owned company that provides pest control services throughout the Canterbury region. Paul Ash is the General Manager, 03 353 9001 (Christchurch).

Pay us an e-visit

Copies of this and past issues of this newsletter are available on Environment Canterbury's website at www.ecan.govt.nz. If you would like to see more information on this site about animal and plant pest management, please phone Portfolio Manager, Biosecurity/Pest Management, Rob Phillips on 03 353 9009 ext 7069.

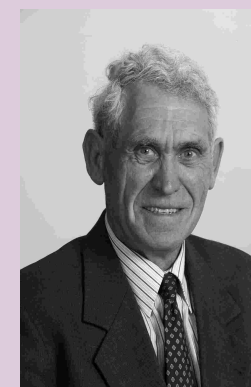
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March 2005

Pest News

A newsletter about pest management in Canterbury



Message from the Pest Committee Chairman

The good spring and early summer experienced across the region will bring with it good germination of targeted pest seeds and also the likelihood of a good seed set of those plants.

It is timely therefore to focus attention on land occupier responsibilities particularly with respect to nasella tussock, gorse, broom and nodding thistles, also old man's beard. The Regional Pest Management Review held in April and May awaits final decisions on some roadside responsibility matters but essentially rolls over the provisions that have been in place since 1998. Rabbits and wallabies also need to be constantly monitored (and controlled, if necessary).

The comprehensive vector control programme for possums and ferrets continues with good progress being made combating Tb in cattle and deer. While not dramatic, the number of infected herds continues to fall, both nationwide and within the Canterbury region. This is positive evidence that the huge investment and effort is paying off. Also we cannot allow any complacency to

become established particularly with nasella. Over five decades of dedicated hard work has got nasella down to very low and manageable levels. A new generation of farmers find it difficult to comprehend what it was like in the 1940's and 1950's. Sadly a few are getting very late with their grubbing which isn't fair on their neighbours and provides an unwelcome addition to the seed bank.

Occupiers must ensure their grubbing programme is completed by the end of October each year. Left till November/December, it is too late and any seed will be viable even when the plant is grubbed. Biosecurity staff will be having one-on-one discussions this coming autumn with farmers whose properties have a poor record. This will help ensure that the work is undertaken in plenty of time. On the biodiversity front, an active programme targeting wilding conifers is underway in conjunction with the Department of Conservation and work continues with boneseed control in the coastal areas.

For my part I was delighted to be confirmed as Chairman of the Pest Portfolio for this term of Council and look forward to working with farmers and importantly the Pest Liaison Committees whose role is so important.

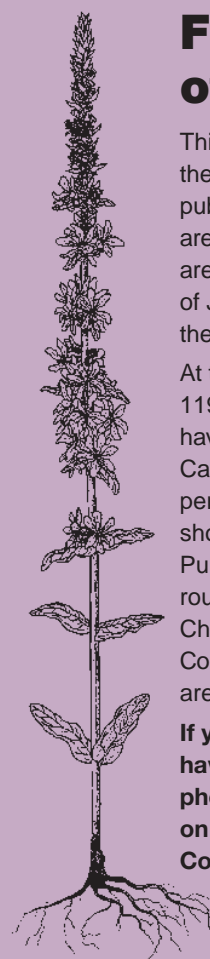
**Cr Robert Johnston
Pest & Biosecurity Portfolio Committee Chairman**

Fewer sightings of the purple peril

This season so far there have been few sightings of the pest plant purple loosestrife despite extensive publicity. "We hope this indicates that the numbers are dwindling," said Environment Canterbury's central area biosecurity teamleader Rob McCaw. At the end of June 2003, 99 reports were recorded and 93 of these were confirmed as purple loosestrife.

At the end of June 2004, 133 reports were recorded, 119 of these were confirmed. So far this year there have been less than 30 reports. Environment Canterbury is asking people to look out for the perennial plant growing up to 3m (usually less), with showy spikes of pink-purple flowers over summer. Purple loosestrife has distinctly square, rather than round, stems when rolled between the fingers. Christchurch City Council, the Department of Conservation, Environment Canterbury and Ngai Tahu are all involved with the campaign to remove it.

If you'd like more information, or suspect you have purple loosestrife in your garden, please phone Environment Canterbury's pest plant line on 03 363 9380 or the Department of Conservation's 'purple peril' line on 03 371 3751.

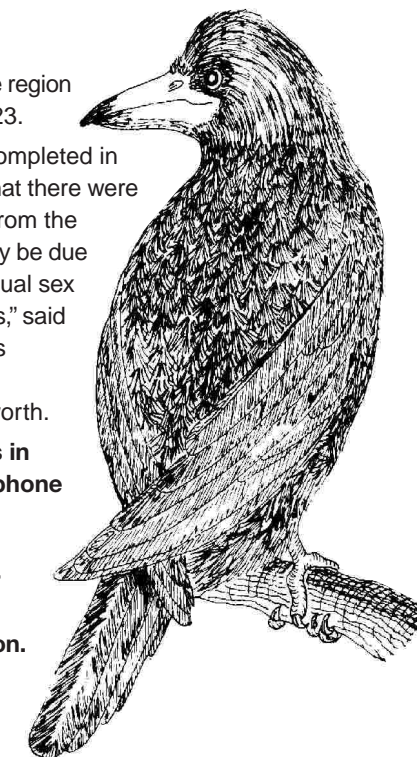


Rooks

The number of rooks in the region has remained at around 23.

The annual rook count, completed in November 2004, shows that there were no newly fledged chicks from the known rookeries. "This may be due to the weather or an unequal sex ratio of the remaining birds," said Environment Canterbury's southern biosecurity teamleader, Brent Glentworth.

Anyone who sees rooks in Canterbury please freephone customer services on 0800 324 63 with a thorough description or preferably map grid reference of their location.



Tb vector control programme for Canterbury

Report from Environment Canterbury's bovine Tb vector management team

New operations

Six new operations in the region have been approved by the Animal Health Board for this year (2004/05). Tendering is finished on possum and ferret work in Lees Valley (Ashley Pest District), the Glens of Tekoa and Island Hills Stations (Amuri Pest District), and Inland Road West (Amuri Pest District), which will involve ground and aerial control. Benmore (Omarama Pest District), Waihaorunga (South Canterbury Pest District) and Ohau/Pukaki area (Omarama Pest District) involve only ground control.

Completed operations

Currently there are 25 successfully completed operations in the Canterbury region. Control and monitoring work continues on more than 35 operations. These are all follow-up operations, which give valuable information about the movement, spread and control of Tb in the region.

Statistics

More than 11,000 possums have been caught in the Canterbury region so far this year (2004/05). In 2003/04 42,247 possums and 2,962 ferrets were captured.

Herd breakdowns

At the end of November 2004, 58 herds in the region were infected with bovine Tb.

Surveys

Ferrets will be collected and autopsied this year (2004/05) from the Mackenzie Basin, Bealey, the Hanmer Basin, Lake Sumner, and South Waimakariri. The results will add to the understanding of Tb movement in ferrets in the region.

Feral pigs potential threat to Tb scheme

Pig carcass dumps have been implicated in re-infecting possums and ferrets with Tb in Canterbury. Environment Canterbury and the Animal Health Board are working with hunters to ensure that this problem does not re-occur. Pig hunters are being asked to help by arranging to leave all pig heads in contained farm offal pits or if this is not possible, to leave the head where the pig is killed, and not dump the head or carcass elsewhere or move live pigs from one area to another. Feral pigs readily catch Tb through scavenging. This infection (which is usually located in the head and neck areas) is spread by possums and ferrets scavenging on pig heads and carcasses dumped by hunters. Possums and ferrets can in turn pass Tb on to domestic cattle and deer.

Biodiversity operations – Ashburton River

In September and October of 2004 the second phase of predator control targeting feral cats, possums, mustelids and rodents was carried out below the state highway bridge on the Ashburton River and at a second site in the south branch of the river at Hakatere.

While this work is mainly aimed at wading and braided river birds, there are also spin-offs for all indigenous fauna, including geckos, skinks and invertebrates. The two sites, covering 1500 ha, were identified as important breeding sites for a number of waterfowl and waders, particularly the wrybill and black fronted tern, which are classified as rare and endemic. The number of predators removed in the second successive season is much reduced from the initial control but still the tallies removed indicate the pressure predators are placing on indigenous fauna. Reinfestation of these sites will always be of concern.

So far operations in 2003 and 2004 have removed from both sites: 1194 possums, 48 feral cats, 51 mustelids, 54 hedgehogs and 432 black backed gulls. The gulls were targeted in the first year on advice from Department of Conservation. They are known to predate eggs and chicks of ground nesting birds so a colony within one site was controlled. The number of rodents destroyed is unknown because they often go underground to die.

Weedbusters

A new initiative known as 'Weedbusters' is underway to raise public awareness of the problems weeds cause to the environment, and ways that people can become involved with their control.

'Weedbusters' is supported by all regional councils and unitary authorities, the Department of Conservation, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the New Zealand Landcare Trust, Landcare Research and other organisations involved in biosecurity.

Weedbusters website is at: www.weedbusters.org.nz

Biological control update

Landcare Research, the Department of Conservation and regional councils nationwide collaborate on projects to control pest plants, using natural predators.

On behalf of this group Environment Canterbury has applied to the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA) for permission to release a new organism, the boneseed leafroller. ERMA will announce its decision early in 2005. Other examples of biological control at work in Canterbury are agents feeding on thistles, ragwort, gorse, broom, hieracium, and old man's beard. Lynley Hayes from Landcare Research reports that there are encouraging signs this year with the number of broom psyllids, gorse soft shoot moths, and gorse colonial hard shoot moths building to good levels at sites in the region.

If you would like more information on biological control of pest plants please see or contact Lynley at Landcare Research phone 03 325 6701 extn 3808.

Managing the varroa bee mite

The Minister of Agriculture has recently given the go ahead to the National Pest Management Strategy for varroa bee mite. The strategy is based on a surveillance programme to enable early detection and eradication of any varroa mites entering the South Island. Environment Canterbury, other South Island regional councils and unitary authorities, and beekeepers have agreed to fund the strategy and have recently met to discuss forming a management agency to implement the strategy. An incorporated society has been established, the first annual general meeting was held in February 2005.

Canterbury's potential pest list

Some plant and animal species are pests in other areas in New Zealand or overseas, but are not yet problems in Canterbury.

We want to gather information on the location and extent of these species within Canterbury so we can decide whether or not to introduce control programmes. This information will be reviewed annually and new potential pest species will be added as necessary. The species on this year's list are:

- **mat grass (*Nardus stricta*)**
- **Madeira vine (*Androdera cordifolia*)**
- **beggar's ticks (*Bidens frondosa*)**
- **moth plant (*Araujia sericifera*)**
- **hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*)**
- **horsetail (*Equisetum hyemale*)**
- **sea lavender (*Limonium companyonis*)**
- **puna grass (*Achnatherum caudatum*)**
- **sulphur crested cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*)**

Environment Canterbury also has the capacity to respond to new incursions, for example a pair of myna birds from Australia that escaped from a ship in Lyttelton in 2004 were caught and destroyed.

If you think you have seen any of these potential pests, please contact Environment Canterbury's central biosecurity teamleader, Rob McCaw on 03 365 3828 extn 7262.

Importing the rabbit calicivirus

Environment Canterbury is part of an Environment Southland-led consortium of regional councils and unitary authorities intending to import the rabbit calicivirus (RCV) from Australia. This will enable the controlled use of RCV as a rabbit biocide, particularly in and around urban areas where it is not possible to use the normal poisoning and shooting control methods. The ongoing availability of RCV would also provide 'peace of mind' to the farming community, which has become reliant on the benefits of rabbit haemorrhagic disease (RHD) that was illegally imported and released in New Zealand in July 1997. The impacts of that introduction have been variable, relating mainly to how the disease was introduced and spread. RCV appears to give the best long-term results where the spread into rabbit populations is entirely natural without any human intervention. The group hopes that the required registration of the product through the Agricultural Chemicals and Veterinary Medicines group in MAF will be completed in early 2005. It is intended that use of RCV will be restricted to pest management agencies responsible for rabbit control or to users specifically authorised by them. It should not be used in any way that may potentially interfere with effectiveness of naturally occurring epidemics of the disease. A protocol is currently being developed by the applicant group to guide its use as a biocide.

The information in this article is from Richard Bowman, Biosecurity Manager at Environment Southland.

What is a biocide?

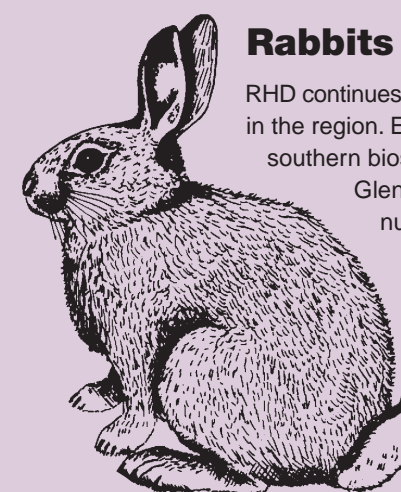
A natural disease or organism which is treated as a poison whereby it is put on bait and its prime means of working relies on animals eating it directly, rather than by being transmitted from one to another.

Port Hills pest control

In co-operation with Christchurch City Council and Department of Conservation, Environment Canterbury is into its second successive year of pest control on the Port Hills. This joint effort is to reduce infestations of introduced weeds and animal pests and promote the growth of indigenous vegetation, which will encourage the return of native insects, birds and reptiles. The two large blocks encompassing the Hills right through the northern side of Lyttelton Harbour from Gebbies to Dyers Pass (6000ha) and from Dyers Pass to Mt Pleasant (1500ha) are being worked on for possums, feral cats, mustelids and rodents. So far 5038 possums, 2 cats and an unknown number of rodents have been killed in both operations.

Boneseed

Environment Canterbury staff and volunteers around the region have been busy removing the pest plant boneseed. On Banks Peninsula the Akaroa-Kaik area has been well cleared out. Only a small amount remains which will be removed next year. The plant is gradually being controlled in the inner Lyttelton Harbour area. Infestations at Okains Bay have been sprayed by helicopter and next year follow-up work will be done. All seedlings have been removed from the Ashburton and Waitaki Rivers. In the north Environment Canterbury staff have been working with coastal communities to remove plants from Leithfield Beach to Kaikoura. **To see a picture of boneseed in flower visit: www.ecan.govt.nz or ask Customer Services for a boneseed fact sheet, phone 0800 EC INFO (0800 32 4636).**



Rabbits and RHD

RHD continues to have an impact on rabbits in the region. Environment Canterbury's southern biosecurity teamleader, Brent Glentworth reports that rabbit numbers have remained relatively static, despite a breeding peak each Christmas. "The main epidemic usually occurs in early autumn and kills the majority of susceptible rabbits. The last three rabbit antibody test rounds which

are undertaken every four months show a level of immunity between 32 and 62 percent of the population at that time," he said. "It is important to realise that if a population is sampled after an epidemic, the number of immune rabbits is high due to the disease removing many susceptible rabbits.

Also, if the population is sampled after breeding, the number of immune rabbits is diluted due to the influx of susceptible rabbits," he said. Environment Canterbury continues to monitor rabbit numbers to detect any possible increase in rabbit numbers because of a higher level of immunity. There is evidence of a highly successful breeding season this year.