

## Get tough is the strong message



*By Paul de Latour,  
acting chair  
Banks Peninsula Pest  
Management Liaison Committee*

The three years since the last pest committee elections have passed very quickly, and we have achieved quite a lot in that time.

We have had good attendance at our meetings and at most of them

we have had two ratepayers who have attended out of interest. I am encouraged to see that so many people on the peninsula take an interest in pest issues

This year we started the community initiated possum control programme, which so far has been successful. So far there have been huge possum kills, which surprised even the people doing the groundwork. With a little more tweaking this programme should be very successful. There may be a few adjustments needed and to that end the committee has made a submission to Environment Canterbury's Annual Plan representing Kaitorete Spit landholders asking that they not be rated for possum control because it is not a significant problem on the spit. A controlled possum operation is to be carried out on the spit to determine just how many possums there are.

The rest of the region looks at Banks Peninsula with envy, because of our built-in control and ability to fund and coordinate control, to the extent that we are showing a decrease in rabbits.

Gorse has continued to be of major concern to the committee, and has had plenty of airing at our committee meetings. So has broom, which is showing increases in parts of the Peninsula.

The firm message from the committee to ECan and landholders is "Get tough on gorse, broom and nassella". The committee encourages ECan to be more proactive on weed notices and enforcing the Regional Pest Management Strategy.

Spring will be on us before we know it so now is an appropriate time to remind landholders to make themselves aware of their control obligations to keep on top of the three pest plants.

Finally I would like to add that I am pleased to see that the relationship between Environment Canterbury, the Christchurch City Council and the Department of Conservation and landholders appears to be growing and working well regarding pests on the peninsula.



## Successful possum removal in year one

*By Ralph Stark, Pest Management Liaison Committee member responsible for the community initiated possum control programme*

The first year of the possum programme is now behind us and we can look back on a very successful removal of the possum pest from the Southern Bays.

The numbers that were removed exceeded expectations as many animals were not officially recorded. The trouble was that rats were also a problem with baits being removed by them and not left for the possums, this added to the issues which drew the first year programme out with the residual trap monitor finally giving the operation clearance.

This experience has resulted in the second year program being split into three areas with three operators active at the same time. This will allow a faster sweep over the areas involved.

It is hoped that the programme will drop numbers to a point that recovery will be slow and a small amount of local control will give a continuing reduction in the possum population on the peninsula.

The drop recorded in rabbit numbers on the peninsula is heartening as the rest of Canterbury records a noticeable increase in this pest population.

The committee's and my belief is that the historic decision to keep paying a rate for rabbit control is something that we all should be proud of, as the cost has been minimal and the benefits significant with the reduction in kill from RHD. The benefits are increasing to us all on the peninsula.

An annual inspection programme throughout the district is undertaken and when that reveals rabbits at levels that need control, that control is undertaken by contractors paid for by our minimal contributions through rates. If you believe that you have an increase in rabbit numbers on your property, call the current contractor, Excell Ltd's Dave Hunter, who will keep you up to date with any planned action.



## Significant gains on the peninsula

*By Councillor Eugenie Sage, Pest Portfolio chair and Selwyn/Banks Peninsula councillor*

Welcome to this edition of Pest News and congratulations to the recently elected members of the Pest Management Liaison Committee (PMLC) for Banks Peninsula. (The names and contact details for committee

members and the chair, Paul de Latour, are on the back page). The committee and its counterparts around the region have an invaluable role in advising Environment Canterbury on how the Regional Pest Management Strategy is best implemented, commenting on ECan's annual budget for pest work and the level of targeted rate for their pest district. The committees are elected every three years after the local body elections.

Highlights for the last 12 months include the Animal Health Board's decision to reduce testing of cattle herds on Banks Peninsula to two yearly, with half the herds tested this year and half next year. This recognises the significant achievement of landholders, the Animal Health Board (AHB), Environment Canterbury and contractors in freeing the Peninsula of bovine tuberculosis.

With an end to local possum control funded through the AHB (apart from small scale surveillance work in former Tb "hot spots"), the Banks Peninsula Pest Liaison Committee has led the region in establishing a Community Initiated Programme to safeguard the gains made in possum control to combat bovine Tb. Rural landholders contribute 75% of the funding through a

targeted rate, with a 25% contribution from general rates.

In the programme's first year, more than 6,000 possums were poisoned or trapped over 19,800 ha. Possum control on conservation reserves by the Department of Conservation (DoC) complemented this work.

Co-ordinated work by the Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust and DoC to remove more than 3600 goats from the Peninsula has benefited landholders and indigenous biodiversity.

There is good news locally on the rabbit front too. Rabbit monitoring results from 2007 show a continuing annual decline in rabbit numbers on Banks Peninsula, in contrast to other parts of the region such as the Mackenzie Basin.

On Banks Peninsula, the average number of rabbits per kilometre has dropped from 14.43 in 1997 to 0.26 in 2007, the lowest average ever recorded in Canterbury since monitoring started in the early 1990s.

Banks Peninsula is the only pest district in the region where landholders pay a service delivery rate for rabbit control. This means control can be done early whenever a pocket of rabbits is found, though little work was needed in 2007.

I look forward to working with Peninsula landholders and community interests on the most effective ways to control animal and weed pests to benefit farming, the Peninsula's distinctive landscapes, and biodiversity.



## Out of place plants on Banks Peninsula

*By Pam Richardson, committee member with responsibility for wilding pines*

A weed is a plant out of place and on Banks Peninsula wilding pines are beginning to appear in a number of places where it is not appropriate to see them emerging. Wilding pines have not been an issue but as we are seeing areas less intensively grazed and land retired from grazing there are now areas where we are seeing the increasing spread of pines.

Many of the problem areas originate from those old man roadside pines and some from plantation forestry. It is when they spread into rocky outcrops and other areas that they start to compete with our special plants of Banks Peninsula and destroy those valuable species.

Banks Peninsula has the opportunity now to remove those unwanted trees and prevent the devastating situation we see in other districts such as North Canterbury and the Mackenzie Basin.

Wilding pines have been brought up for discussion and we would like to start mapping where they are and hear of any problem areas. Landowners could also be removing those out of place plants while they are easy to remove with the costs at this stage are minimal.

Let's get on top of the issue before it gets out of control.

**Pay us an e-visit**

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# It's gorse and broom time again

Early summer is a good time to control broom and gorse on properties and boundaries before the busy summer season begins.

The aim of this work is to prevent gorse and broom from infesting land that is presently free of these two plant pests.

It is the responsibility of land owners or occupiers under the Canterbury Regional Pest Management Strategy (RPMS) to contain gorse and broom if they are present on their properties.



Gorse



Broom

## Here is a helpful check list

### Hedges

- Have gorse and broom hedges been clipped or trimmed to prevent plants from setting seed and spreading into clear unaffected areas?

### Roadsides

- Is the roadside clear of gorse and broom?  
or
- Are gorse and broom infestations along the roadside, which are not part of a hedge, at least 10m from the centreline of the road?



**Hedges and roadsides:** This is **Not OK** - Gorse and broom need to be at least 10m from boundaries which is the centre of the road.

### Boundaries

- Is there a 10m clearance along the full boundary to prevent seeds or plants spreading into neighbouring clear, or being cleared, properties?

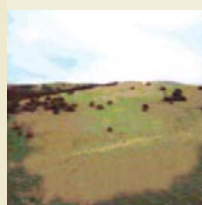


**Boundaries: Good** - This landowner has sprayed and killed all plants that are within 10m of their neighbour's property, that is gorse and broom-free.

### Scattered plants

- Have all scattered or isolated plants been killed? (This includes clusters of plants less than 50m<sup>2</sup> and more than 5m from block gorse and broom).

Landholders are not required under the RPMS to eradicate block gorse and broom infestations. (These are infestations greater than 50m<sup>2</sup>). However any extra work is recognised and appreciated by Environment Canterbury and the community.



**Scattered Plants: Not OK** - All scattered plants including patches less than 50m<sup>2</sup> which are more than 5m from block gorse and broom need to be eradicated to prevent spread. A block is a patch greater than 50m<sup>2</sup>.

The responsibility for controlling pests on roadsides varies among district councils within the Canterbury region. In the former Banks Peninsula District it is the adjacent landholder's responsibility unless the road is a State Highway.

The Regional Pest Management Strategy's objective for gorse and broom is to prevent land currently free from gorse and broom being infested.

## Boneseed update

Environment Canterbury continues to control boneseed on the peninsula. All the initial control operations have been done outside the containment zone. The only part of the Banks Peninsula Pest Management District within the containment zone is Diamond Harbour. By now all mature plants have been removed from the problem areas which are mainly the northern and eastern bays. ECan will next carry out follow-up operations to deal with regrowth and seedlings. Boneseed is a pest because it invades coastal areas particularly disturbed land and bare cliffs. It is a shrub which can reach 1.3 - 1.5 metres in height. The leaves are thick and leathery and its flowers are bright yellow. If you see isolated mature boneseed plants contact a biosecurity officer.

## Biological control – natural born killers

Environment Canterbury and other regional councils work with Landcare Research in the field of biological control of pest plants. Landcare Research studies the natural predators of some of New Zealand's pest plants. It tests their suitability for release under New Zealand conditions, then passes them to Environment Canterbury and other regional councils for distribution. Biological control agents released in Canterbury include agents for controlling gorse, broom, old mans beard, hieracium, ragwort and nodding thistle. A recent release on the peninsula was an agent for boneseed: the leafroller caterpillar, at Diamond Harbour.

## Nassella tussock



It may not be as common as it is further north in the region but Environment Canterbury is asking all landholders on the peninsula to keep an eye out for nassella tussock. Nassella can be found throughout the Canterbury region. The Hurunui District remains the most seriously infested area followed by Banks Peninsula and the Rakaia River catchment.

It is a pest because it grows fast and can rapidly dominate grasslands, eventually smothering them. It is unpalatable to stock. It will grow almost anywhere, but is commonly found on sunny slopes, dry spurs and knobs of tussock grasslands, and in stony riverbeds.

Nassella tussock is a tufted perennial with fine leaves, erect when young but slightly drooping when older. The leaves feel rough when rubbed downwards. The plant looks very similar to native tussocks, which makes identification difficult. Mature plants are up to half a metre high and one metre across. Each mature plant can produce up to 100,000 seeds per year. Grubbing needs to be done before the end of September to avoid seed spread. The seed straw is readily carried by wind and can travel many kilometres. It is also distributed by water, stock, and machinery or on the bark of milled trees.

The aim of the Regional Pest Management Strategy is to, progressively reduce the population of nassella tussock within the Canterbury region.

If you think you have nassella tussock, contact a Biosecurity Officer.

## Biosecurity Staff at Environment Canterbury

The Biosecurity Manager is responsible for implementing the Regional Pest Management Strategy. The Biosecurity Manager is Graham Sullivan. Phone 03 684 0535.

The biosecurity section is organised into three teams: Northern, Central and Southern. The Banks Peninsula Pest Management District is in the Central area

The Central Area Team Leader is Rob McCaw in Christchurch. Christchurch Biosecurity Officers are Gemma Bradfield, Stephen Brown, Sam Thompson and John Thacker, 03 365 3828. The Darfield Biosecurity Officer is Errol Barnes, 03 3188 009. The Little River Biosecurity Officer is Jock Bulman, 03 325 1103.

Rabbit Matters: Timaru-based Brent Glentworth is responsible for all rabbit matters south of the Waimakariri River. Ph 03 684 0500

Contracts Management: 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, 03 363 9320. Kevin is helped by Bovine Tb management officers Pleasant Point-based Grant May 027 2844 813 and Amberley-based Phil Spencer 027 437 4745.

Pests and Biosecurity Portfolio Committee Chairperson is Cr Eugenie Sage, ph 03 942 1251 or eugenie.sage@ecan.govt.nz

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