

Rabbits on the rise

*Selwyn Pest Liaison
Committee Chairman,
Gary Doyle*



Weed control has always been a hot topic, but are we doing any more than lip service to actually control these weeds? I can well recall, prior to the amalgamation of smaller councils in 1989, being visited by the local Noxious Weeds Inspector. He informed me that I had allowed a gorse plant to thrive on the State Highway frontage of my property. This came as a surprise to me so I went out and checked, and sure enough there was a plant, approximately 18 inches high and nowhere near flowering, a quick yank and it was history.

Nowadays I drive around and see all manner of noxious weeds growing uncontrolled on roadsides and especially along water-races, and completely ignored by everyone. The first people we think to turn to are Selwyn District Council, but it's not their issue, it is Environment Canterbury's. However do they have the staff and resources to manage the problem for us? No, they do not. So what is the next step, do we continue to ignore the problem or do we try to find a solution? Ignoring it is of course the cheap option; to control it will require resources. This in turn may need an increase in rates, but if we are to get on top of the issue then that's got to be one of our options.

Roadside growth and the spread of weeds by vehicles, animals and water-ways will always be with us, and active and where required, aggressive policing is needed to control this spreading problem. So I would contend that it is time to grasp the nettle and take some affirmative action or are we really ready to wave the white flag?



Protect your investment!

With harder economic times and financial pressure on rural businesses it is easy for pestcontrol to take a back seat. Unfortunately, pests still multiply during tough times and if control is not kept up, progress made during previous years can be quickly lost. Prevention (and control) is better than the cure and your good work won't be in vain, as long as you keep it up!

Biological Control update



Boneseed leaf rollers have been released at several sites in the Selwyn/Banks Peninsula areas. There are no confirmed sites where the biological control organism has become established in Canterbury to date.

Canterbury Regional Pest Management Strategy 2005-2015: 5 year Review

The Canterbury Regional Pest Management Strategy 2005-2015 became operative on 1 July 2005. Environment Canterbury must review the RPMS half way through its operative 10-year period, by 30 June 2010. The five year review is to check on whether the RPMS is effective and to highlight areas where more work or a change of focus is needed before a full review of the strategy in 2015.

The time for making initial written suggestions (by August 7) has passed, but further suggestions may still be considered. There will also be an opportunity for you to give your views at one of the local meetings to be scheduled from October this year. Watch newspapers and the Environment Canterbury website for dates and news on the review process.

For detailed information, call Ray Maw on 03 371 7187 or email him at ray.maw@ecan.govt.nz

A discussion paper on the review can be downloaded at www.ecan.govt.nz/Plans+and+Reports/pestAndWeeds or call Customer Services on 03 353 9007 for a hard copy.

Governors Bay – “Beard” gets more than just a trim!

The Governors Bay Community Association, Christchurch City Council, the Governors Bay Landcare Group and Environment Canterbury joined forces three years ago with local residents to tackle the bush-choking pest, Old Man’s Beard. Slow but good and steady progress is being made in reducing its stranglehold on the Governors Bay area.

Easy-to-use gel herbicide is available at a reduced price to assist locals in killing Old Man’s Beard on their properties thanks to the Governors Bay Community Association. The Christchurch City Council is continuing its control programme on Sugar Loaf Reserve to reduce the area being smothered by the plant. Environment Canterbury has provided financial assistance to engage contractor Habitat Restoration Services Limited to carry out Old Man’s Beard control along the foreshore walkway. The work of other local community groups in the surrounding area is also helping tighten the noose on the pest.

This community project has the potential to get Old Man’s Beard under control, but it’s a long distance relay, not a sprint. The more hands that can hold the baton, the better - which is where you come in! You too can be a part of the success by checking for and killing any plants you might find in your own back yard or by joining with other volunteers for working bees. This project has been made possible due to the initiative of the Governors Bay Landcare Group.

Visit www.ecan.govt.nz/ombrules for more about Old Man’s Beard rules



Maintaining a successful Gorse and Broom control programme

- Clear boundaries of gorse and broom at least 10 m back (where neighbouring boundaries are clear or being cleared of gorse and broom).
- Trim boundary hedges, top back and sides after flowering but before seed set annually.
- Focus on clearing scattered plants and small patches. These are the biggest threat to clean areas on properties. It is more cost effective than spraying block infestations (areas greater than 50sqm) or trying to reclaim heavily infested areas.
- Plan and work methodically across the property, beginning with the least infested areas and working back towards block infestations.
- Control plants before seed set to prevent more seed adding to the seed bank.

If you would like assistance in developing a Gorse and Broom weed control programme for your property or would like to discuss your current control programme feel free to contact a local Biosecurity officer for advice.

Working together, succeeding together!

Environment Canterbury, The Department of Conservation and Christchurch City Council have joined forces on a long term project to eradicate Darwin’s Barberry from Otahuna.

Environment Canterbury has provided funding for a contractor to control Darwin’s Barberry on a private landowner’s property in Otahuna via the Canterbury regional pest management’s Biodiversity Pest Programme. The control work undertaken by contractor Wai-ora Landscapes supports the Department of Conservation and the Christchurch City Council’s biodiversity work on neighbouring public “high value environmental areas”(HVEA’s),

Land occupiers and community groups wanting to protect HVEA’s from any plant or animal listed in the biodiversity pest programme are able to request funding assistance through Environment Canterbury’s Biosecurity section. Applications should demonstrate community commitment and buy-in to the project, and describe the potential for a project’s successful outcomes to contribute to biodiversity.

Pay us an e-visit

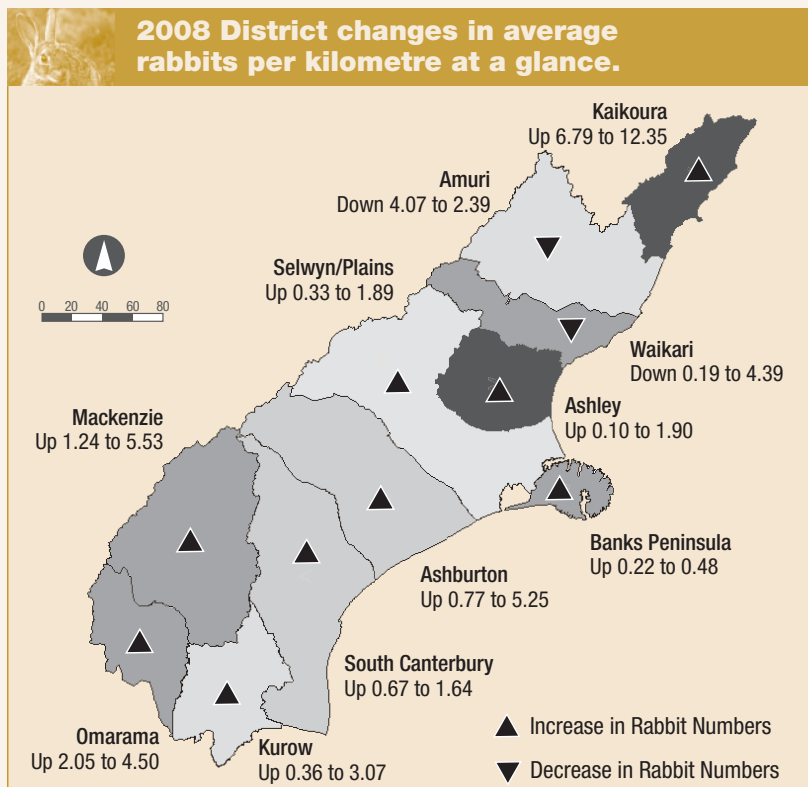
Copies of all pest newsletters are available at www.ecan.govt.nz.

www.ecan.govt.nz

Selwyn Rabbit numbers

Spring 2008 rabbit monitoring results indicate that nine of the region's eleven pest districts have shown rabbit increases over the 2007 figures.

South Canterbury, Selwyn/Plains, Banks Peninsula and most of Ashburton and Ashley pest districts continue to have rabbit populations that are generally considered stable for now. Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD) epidemics, rainfall, disease, predation and some secondary control appears to be containing numbers effectively at present.



1080 – Vital for animal pest control

Pest and Biosecurity portfolio chair & Selwyn/Banks Peninsula Councillor, Eugenie Sage



The use of poisoned bait, particularly 1080 for the control of animal pests, has always attracted controversy and that's a good thing. It keeps us honest. It helps us focus on what we are trying to achieve in pest control and knowing we are accountable, makes sure we only use the best methods available.

The challenge in Canterbury is to find an efficient and cost effective way of reducing rabbits and possums over some challenging and extensive terrain. In some cases, poisons are the only viable way of saving pasture and the soils it depends on and protecting our unique indigenous biodiversity.

Where the use of 1080 is absolutely necessary, it is always with permission and usually at the request of the land owner/occupier. Environment Canterbury's Biosecurity team makes sure it complies with the Resource Management Act and the best practice standards set by the Environmental Risk Management Agency (ERMA). That's a lot of eyes and ears making sure things are done the right way!

At the request of the pest committee chairs and as part of an integrated approach to animal pest management, Environment Canterbury is applying for a region wide resource consent for 1080 use on private land. This would be mainly to control rabbits, wallabies and possums through the targeted spread of carrot bait and cereal pellets. It would save private landholders from having to apply for individual resource consents provided they meet standard conditions.

Rabbit numbers in particular are increasing as RHD (rabbit haemorrhagic disease) becomes less effective and alternative control measures now need to be stepped up.

In finalising Environment Canterbury's 10 year plan in June councillors responded to public and ratepayer submissions by re-instating the regional funding share of the bovine Tb programme at approximately 10% of the programme's cost in Canterbury for two years. Many of the 72 submissions said that reducing funding to control possums, ferrets and other Tb vectors would undermine the gains made in recent years.

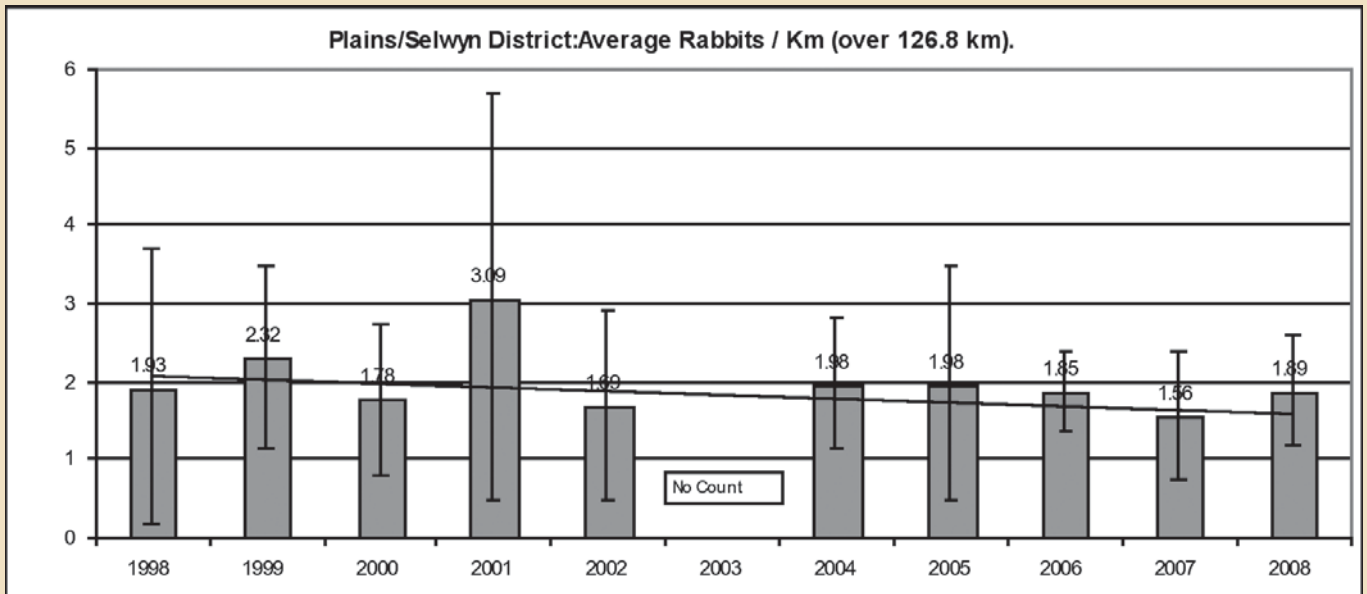


Selwyn annual mean Rabbit numbers 1998-2008

The below Plains/Selwyn Pest District graph reflects a low and stable rabbit population. There has been a small increase in annual rabbit means by 0.33, from 1.56 (2007) to 1.89 (2008) rabbits per kilometre. However the confidence intervals show an overlap for the decade 1998-2008, suggesting little measurable change during this time at around 2 rabbits per kilometre.

Since monitoring began in 1993 the highest rabbit average was 4.1 per kilometre which occurred in 1997, prior to the introduction of RHD.

Over those areas monitored it appears RHD epidemics, changes in land use and possibly some secondary control by landowners continue to keep the rabbit population low and under control.



95% confidence interval error bars are shown in black. These bars show a range around the mean. This graph is based on data from 126.8 kilometres of transect, taken across seven properties.

Biosecurity Staff at Environment Canterbury

Graham Sullivan is the Biosecurity Manager responsible for implementing the regional pest management strategy, phone 03 687 7835.

The biosecurity section is organised into three teams:

The Northern Area Team Leader is Laurence Smith in Amberley, phone 03 314 8014.

The Central Area Team Leader is Rob McCaw in Christchurch, phone 03 372 7262.

The Southern Area Team Leader in Timaru is Brent Glentworth, phone 03 687 7834.

Bovine Tb Management is through TB Free New Zealand, phone 03 363 3090.

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