

Keep on top of rabbits and nodding thistles



A note from Ashley Pest Management Liaison Committee Chairperson, Ian Ford.

It is my pleasure as Chairperson of the Ashley Pest Management Liaison Committee to contribute to the Pest News, which is coming to you as ratepayers, from Environment Canterbury.

With rabbit numbers increasing and a higher rate of immunity to Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD), some rabbit prone areas of the district are above Level 3 on the McLean Scale and Notices of Direction have been issued to some property owners to reduce their rabbit populations to an acceptable level. Under the present system it is the property owner's responsibility to do this and a coordinator is now available to work with groups of farmers to achieve a better result.

The Animal Health Board Tb vector control eradication programme continues to reduce the possibility of spread of disease by this means in cattle and deer herds. The only infected cattle herd in our district obtained its infection from the movement of stock carrying the disease.

Nodding thistle seedlings were active in the autumn following the early autumn rain. As they are prolific

seeders, it is important to have measures in place to reduce their spread, and a 40 metre distance kept clear of nodding thistles around all property boundaries is a requirement.

A separate letter outlining the plant pest control on roadsides is sent to all property owners in the Waimakariri District in the spring, with a third of the roadsides inspected in February / March each year. Roadsides are the shop window to a property and are an indication as to what the rest of the property may be like. Hurunui district roadsides are the responsibility of the Hurunui District Council.

The hill and high country properties within the district have programmes in place to control gorse and broom on their properties. Other property owners should eliminate all scattered and isolated plants to comply with the Regional Pest Management Strategy and have their gorse and broom hedges trimmed annually.

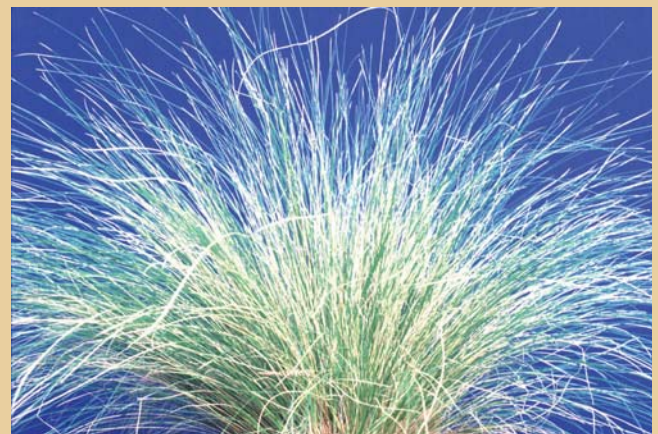
A new Liaison Committee has been elected recently in the Ashley Pest District for a three year term but we lack representation for the Lees Valley, Waikuku / Woodend and Kaiapoi / Clarkville areas. If anyone from these areas is willing to come on the committee we would appreciate your input.

Nassella in the Waimakariri

Nassella tussock has a very low level of incidence in the Waimakariri district. It occurs on only 22 properties. For this reason it is very important that people are aware of the plant, the threat it poses and its identifying characteristics, as they see far more of their land on a regular basis than do biosecurity staff.

Biosecurity Officers inspect all known sites in the Waimakariri district each year and grub any plants they find, and also check the immediate vicinity. Search programmes of areas considered prone to nassella infestation are carried out annually.

Nassella tussock is a non-palatable, tufted perennial plant with fine leaves that are erect and bright green when young but become duller and slightly drooping when older. The leaves feel rough when rubbed downwards. The plant is very similar to native tussocks in appearance, which makes identification more difficult. Nassella is extremely adaptable and grows in a wide range of habitats but prefers sunny, dry sites with poor vegetative cover and light soil.



The Hurunui district is the most heavily infested area in the Canterbury region where 872 properties are recorded as previously or still having nassella tussock.

If you have a plant which you suspect may be nassella tussock or you would like further information please contact Environment Canterbury's Amberley Office, Phone (03) 314 8014.

Committee's work invaluable

By Councillor Eugenie Sage, Pest and Biosecurity Portfolio chairperson



Congratulations to the recently elected members and chairperson of the Pest Management Liaison Committee (PMLC). The committee and its counterparts around the region advise Environment Canterbury (ECan) on how the Regional Pest Management Strategy, which

provides the framework for the control or eradication of listed animal and plant pests, is best implemented.

The committees also comment on ECan's annual budget for pest work and the level of targeted rate for their pest district, and liaise between rural landholders and the Council. The committees are elected every three years after the local body elections.

Highlights for the last 12 months include the continued decline in the number of cattle and deer herds infected with bovine Tb, to 14 in Canterbury in April. This is on track to achieve the 2013 goal of 0.2% infected herds or two herds in every thousand.

Despite strong representations from Environment Canterbury, the Animal Health Board (AHB) has decided to remove the management of vector control contracts from the regional council and take over this role itself. The 12 months until July 2009 will be a transition period. In 2008/09 ECan will continue to collect the 10% local share contribution

towards the cost of funding the AHB programme. It will consult further before deciding what arrangements should apply in 2009/10.

With rising levels of immunity to Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD) in young rabbits, the 10-year control holiday may be ending. An estimated 26,000 ha in Canterbury now have rabbit numbers above the modified McLean scale level 3, the level where the Regional Pest Management Strategy requires that control be undertaken.

There has been a strong landholder response to increasing rabbit numbers. Aerial control operations in the Waiau have been helped by Land Information NZ organising control in part of the riverbed. In North Canterbury, 38 properties were non-compliant in the year to 30 June 2008, but the Council has only had to start organising rabbit control itself (and recovering the costs from the landholder) for one property.

To help make the "user pays" regime more effective, Environment Canterbury will soon apply for a region wide resource consent for the use of 1080 impregnated baits to control rabbits, possums, and wallabies in identified areas. If granted, the consent could be used by contractors certified by ECan.

I am happy to be contacted and look forward to working with landholders and community interests on the most effective ways to control animal and weed pests.

Cr Eugenie Sage, ph 03 942 1251 or eugenie.sage@ecan.govt.nz.

Rabbits...in the spotlight

From the *Canterbury Regional Rabbit Trends Report 2007*

Rabbit numbers continue to increase in many areas of the Canterbury region. In the Ashley Pest District 99 property inspections to check rabbit levels have been carried out up to June 30 this year.

From these inspections 5 landowners have been issued with Notices of Direction requiring them to reduce rabbit levels on their land.

The Ashley district has considerably less historically rabbit-prone country than the other pest districts north of the Waimakariri River. The main areas are the hill and downs country between Amberley and the Waipara River, the coastal strip from the Waimakariri River north to the Waipara River and some riverbed and immediately adjacent land on the north bank of the Waimakariri River.

The traditional rabbit control methods of patch poisoning, night shooting and fumigation are once again the chosen options as increasing immunity to RHD reduces the impact of the disease. These methods are quite successful on

low-level rabbit infestations and isolated pockets but co-ordinated poison programmes are required once numbers increase.

Farming communities are generally aware of the decreasing effectiveness of RHD and more and more individuals are carrying out traditional rabbit control, rather than pinning hopes on the possibility of a more effective disease outbreak next time round. This proactive approach is encouraged.

Higher levels of immunity to RHD and increasing rabbit numbers need to be addressed, and in the "user pays" environment of pest control it is the responsibility of the land occupier to carry out this work. Discussion between neighbours will help occupiers to take a coordinated approach to control work to ensure that operations are effective and re-infestation from adjacent properties does not occur.

If you require further information or wish to discuss rabbit issues on your property please contact Biosecurity Team Leader Laurence Smith at the Amberley Office of Environment Canterbury. Ph 03 314 8014

Pay us an e-visit

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

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'Sharing' Problem Plants

The ECan Biosecurity team has recently expressed concern about the "sharing" of some regionally restricted garden plant species. While garden centres and nurseries are checked annually and any identified listed Restricted Plants are destroyed, it is apparent that some weedy species are still being actively circulated within the community.

It is likely that most people consider some plants quite harmless and have no qualms about passing them on to friends or neighbours, however there are a number of plants identified as Restricted Canterbury Regional Pest Management Strategy (RPMS). If a plant is classified as Restricted its usually because it has been identified as a potential threat to the agricultural or native landscape (as it has exhibited weedy tendencies either within Canterbury or elsewhere). Even if planted in the garden, it has the potential to jump the fence and threaten natural ecosystems and production. Therefore it is an offence under the Biosecurity Act to sell, propagate or distribute any plant species that is classified as a Restricted Pest.

A number of familiar plants presently listed as Restricted – buddleja (*Buddleja davidii*), artillery/aluminium plant (*Galeobdolon luteum*), Spanish heath (*Erica lusitanica*) and German ivy (*Senecio milkanioides*) – are just a few of a long list. Gardeners are not required to remove Restricted Plants present in their gardens but are urged to dispose of any

vegetation responsibly such as at the greens area of your local land fill, NOT in riverbeds or farm dump sites as it increases the chance of these plants further establishing in native or productive communities.

A good example of how Restricted Plants are easily spread in the community was brought up by the owner of a garden centre recently. He received a call from a member of public asking if he stocked Mexican daisy or artillery/aluminium plant. He explained that these were Restricted Plants and it was illegal for him to sell them. Unconcerned the woman said that she would get some cuttings of these plants from a friend or her old garden and re-plant them at her new property. If anyone has tried to control Artillery plant they will know how hard it is to kill in a garden setting let alone if it escapes into the wild. It is important to understand that these plants wear the restricted tag for a reason and although they may not show too many weedy tendencies in a controlled garden, they can, in a suitable environment, become a real nuisance and extremely difficult and costly to control.

Gardeners can make a difference by identifying and preventing further circulation of problem plants. For information on Restricted Plants and how to control them please contact a Biosecurity Officer at Amberley, who will be willing to help.

Good progress with Bovine Tb control

From the Tb Contracts Management Team

Excellent progress is being made with the control of Bovine Tb in the Ashley Pest District.

The 2007/08 possum programme has been completed with contracting companies achieving their contract specifications.

In the 2006/07 round up, 174 ferrets and 3526 possums were dispatched, of which 2700 possums were from the Waimakariri North and South initial operations.

In the 2007/08 round up, 163 ferrets and 2860 possums were dispatched of which 1522 possums were from the Eyre River North and South initial operations.

Pre-control monitors in the Ashley Buffer and Ashley Forest operations were carried out in 2007/08. The results show 11.54% RTCI in Mt Thomas and a 7.83% RTCI in Mt Grey/Ashley Forest.

For the 2008/09 programme, the money available for Canterbury has reduced so the control programme is targeted more specifically to at-risk areas. Not all operations require possum and ferret control every year because numbers are so low.

The control programme for the Ashley Pest District is:

Amberley Coast	Targeted ferret control
Amberley Hills North	Targeted ferret control
Amberley Hills South	Complete possum and targeted ferret control
Ashley Buffer	Targeted possum control
Ashley Forest	Targeted ferret control

Ashley River North	No control
Belfast	No control
Eyre River North	Complete possum control
Eyre River South	Complete possum control
Lees Valley	No control
Okuku Gorge	Targeted possum control
Oxford/Rangiora	Targeted possum control
Waimak Ashley	Targeted possum control
Woodend	
Waimakariri Nth.	Complete possum control
Waimakariri Sth.	Complete possum control

Please note: Complete possum control indicates that the whole operation is being worked. Targeted possum control indicates that just parts are being worked.

Movement Control Herds (12-06-08) – Northern Region

	Cattle	Deer	District totals
<i>Kaikoura</i>	3	0	3
<i>Amuri</i>	3	1	4
<i>Waikari</i>	3	1	4
<i>Ashley</i>	1	0	1
Region totals	10	2	12

Phillip Spencer
Northern Region Bovine Tb Contracts Manager

Roadside plant pests and inspections

The Ashley Pest Management Liaison Committee has asked Environment Canterbury to carry out annual inspections to ensure that all roadside plant pests are controlled each year.

Responsibility for the control of roadside plant pests from the centre line of the road into the property for the specified distance falls to the neighbouring land occupier. Where land is beside a state highway, Transit New Zealand carries out roadside control work. Land occupiers are then responsible for ensuring that plant pests are controlled from and including the roadside fence into their property for the specified distance.

To enable Environment Canterbury's biosecurity staff to inform all land occupiers of their responsibilities for the control of roadside pests a letter is sent out with the Waimakariri District Council rate demands each year. As well as informing land occupiers of their responsibilities the letter assists biosecurity staff to carry out roadside inspections efficiently and cost-effectively by giving a date for control work to be completed.

Pests and Biosecurity Staff at Environment Canterbury

The Biosecurity Section is organised into three teams: Northern, Central and Southern. The Kaikoura, Amuri, Ashley and Waikari Pest Management Districts are in the Northern area.

The Northern Area Team Leader is Laurence Smith in Amberley. Amberley-based Biosecurity Officers are Jan Crooks, Peter Morgan, Lance Smith and Lindsay Scott. Leanne Lye is Biosecurity Support Officer for the Northern team, ph. 03 314 8014. The Cheviot Biosecurity Officers are Noel Crump and Tom Kirkwood, ph. 03 319 8614. The Kaikoura Biosecurity Officer is Peter Adams, ph. 03 319 7567.

Bovine Tb and Contracts Manager is Kevin Gallagher. 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, ph. 03 363 9320. In the northern area Kevin is helped by Amberley-based Bovine TB Management Officer Phil Spencer, ph. 03 314 7034 or 027 437 4745.

Rabbit Control Coordinator, Steve Palmer is a contractor to Environment Canterbury, ph. 03 319 8400 or 027 348 5394, or email: airon@xtra.co.nz

The Biosecurity Manager, Timaru-based Graham Sullivan is responsible for implementing the Regional Pest Management Strategy, ph. 03 684 0535.

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

The letter asks rural occupiers to ensure that all gorse, broom and old man's beard on their roadsides within the specified distance is controlled prior to 31 January each year. This work includes hedge trimming. (Please note that scattered plants in a fence line do not constitute a hedge).

Environment Canterbury Biosecurity Officers inspect a selection of roads each year in February to check that control work has been satisfactorily carried out.

This inspection is paid for by rates. Where mature plant pests or untrimmed hedges are found on a roadside a Notice of Direction is issued, giving the occupier until 31 March to carry out this work. All costs of the preparation of the notice and subsequent inspections are charged directly to the individual occupier.

If you are the owner of land in the Waimakariri district but your land is leased, it is your responsibility to ensure the person responsible for plant pest control on the property receives the letter.

Gorse and broom hedges are allowed provided they are trimmed each year before the seeds disperse. September and October is the best time for trimming.



Control work is required on this broom flowering over a boundary fence onto a clean property.

Ashley Pest Management Liaison Committee

Ian Ford (Chairperson)
Ph 03 314 4319

Lyndon Morris
Ph 03 312 8706

John Acton-Adams
Ph 03 314 8062

Andrew Stokes
Ph 03 312 4285

Alf Blatch
Ph 03 312 4552

Neil Cruickshank
(WDC Rep)
Ph 03 313 1513

Representing your pest district

If you have an interest in pest management issues and would like to become a member of your Ashley committee please contact either Biosecurity Team Leader, Laurence Smith on Ph. 03 314 8014 or Ashley Pest Management Liaison Committee Chairman, Ian Ford on Ph. 03 314 4319.