

Committee provides a good spread of representatives



Waikari Pest Management Liaison Committee Chairperson, Harry Pawsey comments

The past year has not been easy: hard enough for most pastoral farms to pay the grocery bill let alone the pest control bill. The good thing about farming is that there is always next year and hope springs eternal, and maybe sheep

and beef will follow the dairy bonanza.

Bovine Tb infected herds continue to decline in response to the previous year's vector control work. The Animal Health Board is reviewing its role and is suggesting that the target should shift from containment to the complete eradication of Tb within 30 years. They are also looking for efficiencies within their present operations and are proposing to undertake all vector control work themselves – work presently done by the Regional Councils.

Rabbit numbers are increasing particularly in and around the riverbeds and along tree lines in the drier areas. Presently 22 properties are under Notice of Direction to undertake control work. Excel Corporation has the contract for 2008-9 to carry out initial inspections for Environment Canterbury's (ECan) Biosecurity Section and will report incidences of rabbits above level 3 on the modified McLean's scale. The Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD) virus remains active in some, but not all, locations. The best way to keep the virus active is to kill all the survivors of a virus outbreak.

The ECan Rabbit Coordinator, Steve Palmer, has assisted occupiers to form groups and co-ordinate control poisoning. Steve works independently of ECan staff and contractors to provide objective advice to farmers on rabbit control options, contractor availability and where to go for consents to apply poisons. If you have a problem, contact Steve. His advice is free.

Gorse and broom always seem to be with us. Turn your back and they pop up again, twice the problem. In times of reduced financial returns it makes sense to concentrate on scattered plants and boundaries before attending to block infestations.

Last April James Forbes, Ben Cassidy and Tim Cameron joined the committee. This gives the committee a good spread over the Waikari Pest District enabling a full appreciation of the various pest problems. Laurence Smith and his team of Biosecurity Officers continue to serve us well in the battle to contain pests. May the coming year provide more funds to better combat the problem.



Rabbit Coordination



Recently appointed 'Rabbit Coordinator' Steve Palmer (Airon Pest Solutions Ltd) has brought a wealth of animal pest management experience to the community. The Rabbit Coordinator position was created by Environment Canterbury in 2007 and is an advisory and coordination

role. It fills a need, recognised by land occupiers and Pest Management Liaison Committees throughout the region, as rabbit numbers on prone country soar towards pre-RHD levels and traditional control methods are required to get numbers back to acceptable levels.

Steve has been working with seven groups throughout the region and with Land Information NZ who are responsible for pest control in many of the riverbeds in Canterbury.

With over 22 years' experience in animal pest control Steve has a great deal of expertise in the planning and management of aerial work.

"In an RHD environment, any control method that kills potentially immune, adult rabbits is beneficial to a degree, but with immunity averaging between 50 and 70% controlling a low percentage of rabbits in the hope that RHD will take care of the rest is no longer a viable option," Steve said.

"Effective rabbit control that will last indefinitely and obtain the best results from the cycles of RHD needs 95% of the population to be controlled in a short period of time. Piecemeal rabbit control spread over weeks or months will not keep ahead of breeding cycles and rabbit movement," he said.

An increasing number of properties throughout Canterbury are reporting rabbit numbers well above the level that control work is required.

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

Rabbit numbers continue to increase

From the Canterbury Regional Rabbit Trends Report 2007

Rabbit numbers continue to increase in many areas of the Canterbury region. In the Waikari Pest District 56 property inspections to check rabbit levels have been carried out up to June 30 this year.

From these inspections five landowners have been issued with Notices of Direction requiring them to reduce rabbit levels on their land, making a total of 22 properties in the district currently under a Notice of Direction.

The area has a considerable amount of historically rabbit-prone country. Much of the Waikari district provides ideal habitat for rabbits. Their preference is for free-draining soils, sunny faces and a moderate rainfall, which are all prevalent in much of North Canterbury.

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 or the infestation becomes more widespread.

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 is concerned about people "sharing" some regionally restricted garden plants. Although garden centres and nurseries are checked annually and any identified listed Restricted Plants are destroyed, it appears that some weedy species are still being actively circulated within the community.

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

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

of any vegetation responsibly such as the greens area of a local landfill, NOT in waste spaces such as riverbeds or farm dump sites because this 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 an owner of a garden centre recently. He received a call from a member of the public asking if he stocked Mexican daisy or artillery/aluminium plant. He explained to the woman that these were Restricted Plants; therefore it was illegal for him to sell them. Unconcerned, the woman said that she was going to get some cuttings of these plants from a friend, or her old garden, and re-plant them at her new property. Anyone who has tried to control artillery plant before will know how hard it is to kill in a garden setting let alone if it escapes into the wilderness. 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 be 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 or advice on how to control them please contact an Environment Canterbury Biosecurity Officer at Amberley, who will be willing to help.

Good progress with Bovine Tb control

From the Tb Contracts Management Team

Good progress is being made with the control of Bovine Tb in the Waikari Pest District.

Movement control herds in the district at June 12th, 2008, remain at three for cattle and one for deer, down from 16 and eight respectively in October 2002.

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

In the 2006/07 round up, 490 ferrets and 324 possums were dispatched.

In the 2007/08 round up, 351 ferrets and 290 possums were dispatched.

For the 2008/09 programme, the money available for Canterbury has been reduced so the control programme is targeted more specifically to at-risk areas.

The control programme for the Waikari Pest District is:

Blythe Valley	Complete possum and ferret control
Castle	Targeted ferret control
Cloudy Hills	Complete possum control
Doctors Hills	Targeted ferret control
Hawarden Basin	Targeted ferret control
McDonald Downs	No control
Moore's	Targeted ferret control

Motunau	Targeted possum and ferret control
Mt Cass	Targeted possum and ferret control
Overton	Targeted ferret control
Scargill	Targeted possum and ferret control
Virginia Road	No control
Waitohi Gorge	Targeted possum control
Waitohi River	Targeted possum and ferret 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

Time to control your gorse and broom

Spring is a good time to control gorse and broom because plants are growing actively and take up the applied chemical more readily.

The aim of this work is to prevent gorse and broom from infesting land that is presently free of these two plant pests. This is achieved by preventing them from seeding.

Some basic guidelines to a successful control programme are:

Keep boundaries clear; nobody wants someone else's problem spreading onto their property especially one that can potentially be expensive to remedy. This should be the very first priority.

If the boundary fence is a hedge have it trimmed annually after flowering but before seed sets.

Focus on scattered plants and small patches; these are the biggest threat to the clear areas of properties. Controlling single plants and small patches is also much more cost-effective than waiting until they become block infestations and attempting to reclaim heavily infested areas.

Effort and money put into block infestations rather than scattered plants could result in scattered plants becoming block infestations.

Plan and work methodically across the property beginning with the least infested areas working back towards block infestations. Don't miss any plants that are of a seed producing size, and plan to carry out follow up work each season before seed sets. The less seed allowed into the soil the better.

If you would like assistance in developing a brush weed control programme for your property, a Biosecurity Officer at Environment Canterbury's Amberley or Cheviot Office will be able to assist and advise on the chemicals to use and the best time to apply them.



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

Waikari Pest Management Liaison Committee

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(Chairperson)
Ph 03 314 4169

Ian Ferguson
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Ph 03 314 6744

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Pests and Biosecurity
Portfolio Committee
Chairperson is
Cr Eugenie Sage,
ph 03 942 1251 or
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nz

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