

The 'Regional Consent' and your poison operation

Environment Canterbury was recently granted a 'Regional Consent' to discharge a vertebrate toxic agent (VTA) including 1080 and Pindone onto land, this consent can be used by landowners for poison operations on their properties.

For the purpose of using the consent, operations have been divided into 3 zones:

- ZONE 1**
Permitted activities under NRRP Rule WQL18
- ZONE 2**
Resource consent in place (The Regional Consent)
- ZONE 3**
Resource consent required

Permitted activities

A resource consent is not required from Environment Canterbury provided the VTA or toxin will not enter water. However there may be requirements under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 (HASNO) and approval from the Medical Officer of Health and also the Department of Conservation may be needed.

Ground-based applications in the region do not require a resource consent unless the operation is in the catchments of the Waimakariri or Opihi Rivers or the Coastal Marine Area providing that:

- the toxin and the method of application are approved for use under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 (HASNO)
- the toxin will not enter any surface or ground water at any stage of the operation including during storage, mixing and cleaning as well as during application.

Aerial applications do not require resource consent if the operation meets the conditions for ground operations, as above, and a further 10 conditions that relate to buffer distances from waterways, notification of the operation and pilot and aircraft requirements. Information on these conditions and requirements is readily available. See contact details below.

Resource consent in place (The 'Regional' consent)

The resource consent in place allows the discharge of a VTA onto land where it may enter water, or onto land in the bed of a river or lake providing certain conditions can be met. Under the consent toxins may be applied within waterway buffer zones and within the Waimakariri and Opihi River catchments. To use the consent for your operation you must be authorised to do so by Environment Canterbury's Pest and Biodiversity Manager. For a list of the consent conditions and for information on how to apply to use the consent, see contact details below.

Resource consent required

If any of the conditions for a permitted activity or the resource consent in place can't be met, resource consent will be required.

For a full list of the conditions applicable to each Zone and for the information you need to decide whether you are planning a permitted activity, need to apply to use the consent in place or must make your own application for resource consent, please contact Steve Palmer, Biosecurity Advisor – Special Projects by phone 03 319 8462, mobile 027 742 6126 or email steven.palmer@ecan.govt.nz

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Pest News

A newsletter about pest management in Canterbury

CHILEAN NEEDLE GRASS UPDATE

Chilean needle grass (*Nassella neesiana*) or CNG was first recorded in New Zealand in the 1930s. There are only two known areas of widespread infestation in the country – in Marlborough and Hawke's Bay. A routine inspection in November 2008 found the first incidence of the plant in Canterbury at a vineyard at Spotswood just north of Cheviot.

CNG is difficult to identify, blending well with other pasture species until flowering and seeding, when seedheads have a purplish tinge and the seed has a distinctive long twisting tail. The extremely sharp corkscrew-shaped seedhead catches easily onto passing animals particularly sheep where it travels into and through the skin to muscle tissue, causing abscessing, allowing infection, downgrading carcasses and contaminating wool.

On discovery of CNG at Spotswood a three-year management plan under emergency provisions in the Biosecurity Act 1993 was put in place. Searching to find the extent of the infestation began within days of the plants discovery and control work began shortly after. This work has continued each year mainly between the months of September and March to coincide with seed production. The infestation was found to cover an area of almost 80 hectares. CNG has been contained over this period with no new sites found outside of the properties identified in 2008.

CNG has now been included in the newly reviewed Regional Pest Management Strategy where the aim will be to progressively reduce the CNG population and prevent the establishment of the plant outside the known area.

Significant work to improve the future control, containment and education around the management of CNG is ongoing.

Information on what is happening with CNG will continue to be made available as it comes to hand. If you would like further information please contact Principal Biosecurity Advisor, Laurence Smith on Ph: 03 314 7034 or 027 231 6478.



Chilean needle grass

Planning for the future includes:

- Operational plans are being formulated by the affected property managers and Environment Canterbury
- The Chilean Needle Grass Action Group's Sustainable Farming Fund (SFF) scoping project report has been produced and work is going into implementing some of the actions identified by the scoping project.
- Proposed changes to the Biosecurity Act which will enable managing pest pathways between regions – CNG infestations in Marlborough are considered a major threat to Canterbury.
- 'Taskforce' has just been licensed for use in New Zealand. The herbicide specifically for the control of Chilean needle grass and nassella tussock will add another tool to the tool box.

Welcome to the September issue of Pest News for Amuri

Pest News provides an interesting overview of what is happening with pest management in your area. In this issue you will find information on your local pest liaison committees, biosecurity staff in your area, the rabbit report, an update on Chilean Needle Grass and much more.

The completion of the Canterbury Regional Pest Management Strategy 2011-2015 on July 1, 2011 represents a significant step forward in pest and biodiversity management in the area.

The strategy provides a framework for the efficient and effective management of pest plants and animals in Canterbury. Environment Canterbury has made a commitment to attend to a number of matters earlier than the 2015 review, including determining what approaches can be made for managing gorse and broom, nassella tussock, rabbits and Bennett's wallaby.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Pest News.

Tom Lambie
Environment Canterbury Commissioner



Reviewed Regional Pest Management Strategy

In February Environment Canterbury commissioners accepted amendments to the Regional Pest Management Strategy as recommended by a board of inquiry. The board of inquiry made their recommendations following a mid-point review involving consultation with local pest liaison committees, stakeholders and with the wider Canterbury community.

The most significant change to the Strategy is the inclusion of Chilean needle grass (CNG). Since the discovery of the only known incursion in Canterbury near Cheviot in 2008, a three year management programme has been carried out under emergency provisions in the Biosecurity Act.

Under the Strategy the aim will be for a progressive reduction in CNG within the containment area and to prevent it from spreading.

The largest number of submissions to the strategy review related to wilding conifers. As a result, all self-seeding conifers established since 1989 will be considered containment pests.

This means that landowners must take all reasonable steps to prevent them from spreading.

Puna grass (*Achnatherum caudatum*) is a new addition to the Strategy, occurring at only two sites in Canterbury. First discovered near Amberley in 1998, Puna grass has been added to the Strategy as a Biodiversity pest and will be controlled annually by Biosecurity staff.

Further review of options for the future management of some of Canterbury's best known pest species, including rabbits, gorse, broom and nassella tussock, will be undertaken over the coming months, and this process began in July this year.



Broom agents to be released

The Northern Biosecurity Team have purchased releases of two biological control agents to assist in the battle to control broom. Purchased from Landcare Research, the agents will be released in early spring.

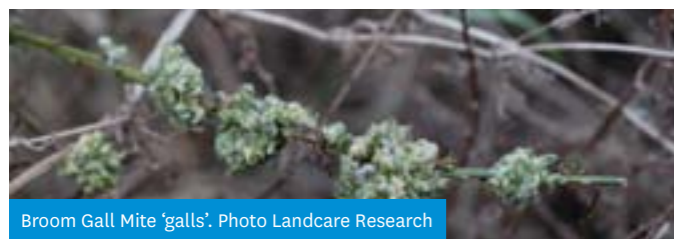
Twenty-four releases, four of the Broom Leaf Beetle (*Gonioctena olivacea*) and 20 of the Broom Gall Mite (*Aceria genistae*) will soon find homes throughout the northern area.

The broom leaf beetle was first released in late 2006. Widespread releases have been and continue to be made. The adult beetle and its mobile larvae damage broom by feeding on the leaves and growing points. The larvae also feed on the fleshy green stems. Heavy feeding reduces the vigour and growth rate of broom plants.

The Broom gall mite was first released in 2008 and widespread releases are continuing, with the mite appearing to establish readily at many sites.

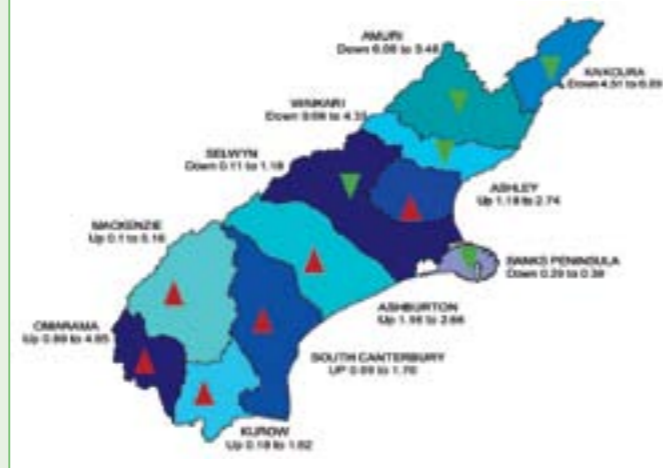
Over winter, the mites, too small to be seen with the naked eye, live in colonies inside the base of broom stem buds. In spring, feeding by the mites causes the buds to develop into deformed lumps (galls). These galls become larger as many generations feed within the stem bud over summer. In autumn as the galls wither the mites move to a new stem bud for the winter. By forming galls on successive years growth the mites cause stunting, reduce flowering and can even kill whole bushes.

Release sites where the agents will have the best opportunity to establish successfully will be carefully selected. Plenty of food, safety from herbicide application and ease of access are important factors. Ease of access will mean the release sites can be monitored regularly to check how well the insects are establishing and make for easy collection and redistribution of the agents in the future.



"The Rabbit Report"

Changes in average rabbit numbers per km from last year (2010)



Rabbit trend information is collected annually in early spring from 2500 kilometres of fixed nightcount routes throughout the region. These transects are monitored at night from motorcycles. The data have been gathered since 1990 and this is the most comprehensive rabbit monitoring data set in the country.

The results of rabbit monitoring carried out in spring 2010 have shown that in six of Canterbury's 11 pest districts rabbit numbers have increased since monitoring in 2009.

In the Amuri Pest District monitoring has shown a decrease in the rabbit population on monitored properties. An increase in secondary control efforts is likely to be maintaining the results of primary control carried out in previous seasons. Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD) epidemics; rainfall, disease and predation will also be affecting on the population.

RHD immunity levels continue to increase across the region. At present immunity to the disease is averaging 64% in the Amuri Pest District.

Big changes to the Northern Biosecurity Team

Two staff members have recently changed roles and three new staff members joined the team in July.

Laurence Smith, who has been the Team Leader since 1996, is now Environment Canterbury's Principal Biosecurity Advisor for the Canterbury region. This role has a primary focus on Biosecurity at a regional level and carries delegated responsibility from the Regional Manager to oversee and co-ordinate the work of the three Biosecurity team Leaders and the Biosecurity Advisor – Special Projects.

Leanne Lye has been appointed Team Leader of the northern Biosecurity team. Leanne has been working at the Amberley office for the past eight years as Biosecurity Support Officer. Leanne is looking forward to the challenges of her new role and leading the team forward.

Leanne's former role has been filled by **Stephanie Schwabe**. Stephanie has been in the aviation industry for the past 22 years, working in various roles with a number of airlines. Most recently she has been with Pacific Blue in their Safety Department as an Auditor and also dealing with company and regulatory requirements.

Steve Palmer has recently rejoined Environment Canterbury. He has been appointed Biosecurity Advisor – Special Projects, based in Cheviot. Steve's primary focus is rabbit co-ordination, wilding conifer operations and the implementation of the Chatham's Islands Regional Pest Management Strategy. Steve has been carrying out the role of Rabbit Coordinator and will be a familiar face to many in the northern area from his time in that position and also from his many years in the field of animal pest control.

Two Biosecurity Officer positions became vacant following the retirement and resignation of two staff members earlier this year. These vacancies have been filled by **Cameron (Cam) Doake** and **Robin Harrison**.

Cam has been working with the Amberley team as a casual employee over the past 2 years carrying out old man's beard control, nassella tussock search and a variety of other tasks. Raised and educated in Rangiora, Cam has recently completed his commercial pilot's licence and enjoys cricket, water-skiing and trail bike riding.

Robin has been working recently in Christchurch on demolition and earthquake clean up. Prior to that he worked with Target Pest and has also spent time in the police force. Another Rangiora local for most of his life, Robin enjoys jet-boating and water sports and working on the land. Cam and Robin are both looking forward to working with the Biosecurity team and the community on pest issues.

The Northern Biosecurity Team covers the area from the Waimakariri River to the Marlborough boundary (north of Kekerengu) with Officers based in Amberley, Cheviot and Kaikoura.



Back row from left - Steve Palmer, Leanne Lye and Robin Harrison.
Front row from left - Laurence Smith, Stephanie Schwabe and Cam Doake.

BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR ROOKS



Rooks are similar in size and appearance to the Australasian magpie but have pure glossy-black plumage with a featherless patch behind the bill. They are highly gregarious birds, foraging daily distances of up to 20 kilometres from breeding rookeries or communal winter roosts. Unless they have been disturbed, rooks will often use the same rookery for breeding each year.

Rooks have no natural predators in New Zealand. They are extremely intelligent and wary by nature. They are omnivorous – cereals at all growth stages, recently cultivated land and stands of walnut trees are preferred feeding sites. In large numbers, rooks can severely damage newly emerging crops or pasture. Although they do feed on grass grub and porina caterpillars, their impact on these pests is negligible.

Because of the birds' suspicious nature anyone sighting a rook should not attempt to shoot at or disturb the bird in any way. Unsuccessful control attempts can lead to birds becoming even more wary and very, very difficult to control. They can also cause a rookery to disband and simply re-establish elsewhere.

Environment Canterbury has been monitoring rook numbers annually since 1983 when over 3700 birds were living in the region. A 'Total Control' pest the objective under the Regional Pest Management Strategy (2005) is to destroy all rooks in Canterbury before 2015.

The rook population in Canterbury at the time of the last census stood at seven birds. Of these, three are in the northern area, two in the Waikari district and one at Tirohanga north of Kaikoura.

The low population is very difficult to monitor and Environment Canterbury staff depend on sightings by the public to keep track of the few birds remaining in the region. If you see these distinctive black birds in your area please contact Biosecurity staff at Environment Canterbury's Amberley Office at your first opportunity.