

Biosecurity Bites

Central Issue

SPRING 2017

What's the Biosecurity team up to?

This season the Central team's main focus will be inspecting all properties with nassella tussock. The opportunity to control nassella is limited to before flowering. Because mature plants can produce up to 120,000 seeds, it is critical to undertake control to prevent spread and that properties are checked for compliance before flowering. The annual control of boneseed, bur daisy and Darwin's barberry are also a priority for the team.

Farm Biosecurity



Farm biosecurity is a set of measures designed to protect your property from the entry and spread of pests and diseases. It's an important part of your farm management, and shouldn't be overlooked if you want your farm to remain pest and disease free.

When thinking about biosecurity on your farm remember that if it moves, it can spread pests! Ask your contractors, employees and visitors to make sure their vehicles, machinery, tools, footwear and clothes are free of dirt and plant matter when they arrive at your property, or provide a wash down facility before they access the working areas of your farm.

Giving Spartina the shove



Spartina - photo courtesy
Department of Conservation

Environment Canterbury is working with the Department of Conservation, Christchurch City Council and local communities on a project aimed at eradicating Spartina (*Spartina anglica*) from Canterbury. Spartina colonises inter-tidal zones where it forms dense clumps and traps sediment. If left to spread it can reduce estuaries and harbours to thin drains surrounded by rough pasture, resulting in a loss of biodiversity. Spartina has been present in Canterbury for some time at Brooklands Lagoon, the Avon-Heathcote Estuary and Lyttelton Harbour.

This new joint project, funded by the Department of Conservation and managed by Environment Canterbury, aims to identify and control all Spartina sites in the city, with the aim of eradicating the pest from Canterbury. If you or your community group would like to get involved in this project, contact coordinator Hannah Eastgate, 027 839 3878, Hannah.eastgate@ecan.govt.nz.

Have you seen Bur daisy?



Bur daisy flowers
and burs

Native to Australia, bur daisy is a small, spiny, perennial herb, up to 40 centimetres tall. It has tiny yellow flowers and produces many seeds contained within small, extremely hard

burs which can contaminate and downgrade wool. The burs attach to passing animals or clothing and are quickly spread.

Please contact the Biosecurity team if you see this plant.

Seeds can remain viable for many years.

Bur daisy is often well established before its presence is apparent.

The Biosecurity team checks each of the small number of sites in Canterbury regularly and controls any plants found before they have a chance to set seed. They also search likely areas around known sites. If you come across bur daisy, please call your local Biosecurity office.

Have you seen Kangaroo grass?

Native to Australia, kangaroo grass is believed to have arrived in New Zealand with merino sheep imported to the Wairau Valley near Blenheim.

An erect perennial grass growing up to half a metre tall, kangaroo grass leaves turn reddish-brown and coarse as the plant matures. It is considered a useful pasture species in Australia, but matures rapidly and becomes unpalatable to stock. It forms dense patches, excluding desirable pasture species and other herbaceous plants and impacting on production. From November to February kangaroo grass produces distinctive large reddish tufted seed heads containing 8 to 10 seeds.

Kangaroo grass is not known to be present in Canterbury. The Biosecurity team would like to hear from you if you have seen this plant.



Distinctive seed head of kangaroo grass

Have you seen Darwin's barberry?

Darwin's barberry is a spiny, evergreen shrub that can grow up to about 4 metres high. It can be found on forest and bush margins, sometimes in pasture and in ungrazed areas. Darwin's barberry has small clusters of glossy dark green leaves up to 3 centimetres long, with spiny edges. Small yellow-orange flowers are produced in clusters from September to February. The flowers are followed by hanging groups of purple-black berries, which are a very popular food source for birds leading to further spread.

There are few known sites in Canterbury. Please contact the Biosecurity team if you see this plant.

Be on the lookout for Myrtle Rust

The Ministry for Primary Industries asks you to keep an eye out for symptoms of myrtle rust and know what to do if you see them.

Myrtle rust is a fungus which can have serious consequences for various species in the myrtle family including native plants such as manuka, kanuka, rata and pohutukawa, as well as exotic myrtles like feijoa, eucalypts and bottle brushes. To date myrtle rust has not been found in the South Island.



Myrtle Rust

What can you do?

Be vigilant for signs of myrtle rust infection; symptoms to look out for are:

- Bright yellow powdery eruptions on the underside of the leaf (young infection)
- Similar eruptions on both sides of the leaf (mature infection)
- Brown/grey pustules on older lesions
- Leaves becoming buckled or twisted and dying off.

If you think you have seen symptoms of myrtle rust, do not touch it:

- Call the MPI Exotic Pest Hotline as soon as possible on **0800 80 99 66**
- Note the location and if possible, take photos, including the type of plant the suspected rust is on
- Don't try to collect samples as this may increase spread.

For more information and images, go to www.mpi.govt.nz



Wallabies are a serious pest – don't keep them as pets!

Wallaby numbers have grown exponentially over the last decade, and many recreational hunters now target them. As well as competing for resources with farm stock, damaging fences and destroying seedling plantation forestry,

they also cause widespread damage to native and endemic plant communities. Leave them within the Containment Area, between the Waitaki and Rangitata rivers. It is an offence under the Biosecurity Act 1993 to capture, convey or keep any wallaby without a permit from the Ministry for Primary Industries (these are only provided to zoological gardens meeting stringent requirements). Please be a responsible hunter and humanely destroy any pouch young from wallaby you have harvested.

For more information, go to www.ecan.govt.nz and search on "Wallaby".



The bright green leaves and yellow-orange buds (left) and flowers (right) of Darwin's barberry

Changes to Nassella inspection process

In the last few years people with nassella tussock on their property may have noticed some changes to the inspection process.

In an effort to use resources as efficiently as possible, the team has been controlling nassella on smaller lifestyle blocks (less than 20 hectares and with fewer than 50 plants).

Other land occupiers who have the pest plant will have received a letter asking them to search their land, control any nassella they find and complete a compliance return when they have finished the work.

This work must be completed by 30 September, at which time a Biosecurity Officer will undertake an inspection to make sure control efforts have been effective.

If you complete your control early, please send us your return and we will undertake an inspection straight away. This ensures that any issues found can be rectified before seeding.

If you need advice on nassella tussock control, have questions about the process, or would like a plant identified, please contact the Biosecurity team.



Nassella tussock

Who do I call?

For all pest enquiries, please contact the Central Biosecurity team via 0800 324 636 or email biosecurity@ecan.govt.nz