

Biosecurity Bites

Northern Issue

SPRING 2017

What's the Biosecurity team up to?

Winter provided some challenges for the community and for the team. Some inspections were postponed because it wasn't safe to move around several properties due to the very wet ground conditions. During early spring the focus will move from gorse and broom to nassella. The Central and Southern Biosecurity teams will spend some time in North Canterbury helping out with nassella inspections. Late spring/early summer will see the focus shift to total control work such as Chilean needle grass, bur daisy and saffron thistle.

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.

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 natives such as manuka, kanuka, rata, pōhutukawa and ramarama, as well as exotic myrtles like feijoa, eucalypts and bottle brushes. To date myrtle rust has not been found in the South Island.

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 because this may increase the spread of the disease.



Myrtle Rust

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. Considered a useful pasture species in Australia, it matures rapidly, soon becoming unpalatable to stock. It forms dense patches, excluding desirable pasture species and other herbaceous plants and impacting 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

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

Have you seen...

Bur daisy?

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



Bright yellow flowers and burs of bur daisy

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 popular food source for birds leading to further spread.



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

If you think you have found bur daisy or Darwin's barberry please call the Biosecurity team.

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".

Spring - a good time to control gorse and broom

Spring is a good time to control gorse and broom when plants are growing and will readily take up applied chemicals.

The priorities for your control programme should be:

- Clear boundaries of all gorse and broom at least 10 metres back where those boundaries are clear or being cleared of gorse and broom
- Focus on clearing scattered plants and small patches - these are the biggest threat to your property
- Plan and work methodically across the property, starting with the least infested areas and working back towards block infestations
- Always control plants before they set seed to prevent more seed being added to the seed bank
- Trim boundary hedges (top, back and sides) each year after flowering but before they set seed.



If you need advice on control of gorse and broom on your property, please contact your local Biosecurity team.

Who do I call?

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