

Biosecurity Bites

Regional Issue

SUMMER 2017

Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease Virus K5



By the time you read this, the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) will have completed its consultation on the application to release RHDV1K5 in New Zealand.

RHDV1K5 is a variant of RHDV1 that causes a fatal haemorrhagic disease in the European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*). It is specific to the European rabbit. Once a rabbit shows symptoms, death is rapid. RHDV is one of the more humane methods of controlling wild rabbits.

A vaccine for domestic and farmed rabbits is available. The current vaccine also protects rabbits from the K5 strain. The New Zealand Rabbit Coordination Group (RCG) is made up of representatives from regional and district councils, Federated Farmers, MPI, the Department of Conservation, and Land Information New Zealand. The applicant for the RHDV1K5 approvals on behalf of the RCG, is Environment Canterbury. Subject to receiving the necessary approvals, the RCG aims to release K5 in March/April 2018 when biological conditions are likely to be most favourable. Controlled release is critical to fully unlocking the benefits of biological control. The strategy includes pre and post release monitoring to measure impacts and inform future research.

Staff available

Environment Canterbury staff can talk to you or your group about pests in the region and what you can do to prevent their spread. We can also discuss options where control is the landowner's responsibility. We are only a phone call away.

Give the Biosecurity team a call via 0800 324 636.

Recent pest incursions

Microplasma bovis in dairy cows: Reported in South Canterbury in July 2017. Subject to intensive response by the Ministry for Primary Industries.

Myrtle rust: To date has not been detected in Canterbury. 110 sites in the Bay of Plenty and Taranaki, and just discovered in Auckland. Mostly present on Ramarama species related to the nursery industry.

For more information go to www.mpi.govt.nz

Wilding conifer control programme



1.1 million hectares of land has been searched, controlled and/or deemed clear of wilding conifers in Canterbury alone in the past financial year. The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) contributed \$3.09 million towards control work in Canterbury in 2016/17. Landowners are expected to contribute 25%. The 2017/18 year will also be busy, with a further \$3.05 million recently approved by MPI for control work in Canterbury.

Canterbury Weedbuster Awards



The Canterbury Weedbuster Awards are an opportunity to thank individuals

and community groups who are voluntarily controlling weeds on public or private land or educating others about weeds and weed control. Nominations for the Canterbury awards open in January 2018.

If you know of groups or individuals whose weed work should be celebrated, please encourage them to apply for the awards. You can also nominate them yourself or let Gemma Livingstone know about them, gemma.livingstone@ecan.govt.nz.

To find out more, go to www.weedbusters.org.nz

New officers join the team



Zipporah Ploeg (Zip) joined the Northern Biosecurity team in September. She is very excited to

be working in North Canterbury and learning more about the Canterbury region. Growing up on a farm in the central North Island, Zip studied for her Masters degree at Victoria University, then worked for Boffa Miskell conducting ecological surveys. She is passionate about New Zealand's environment and its biodiversity. Away from work she enjoys tramping, camping and generally being outside. Zip likes food, beekeeping and diving.



Shae Tainui joined the Central Biosecurity team in September. Before that, he was with the Department

of Conservation based at Geraldine. And earlier, Shae worked with Excell Biosecurity in North Canterbury on possum and ferret control that saw him work throughout the region and into Otago. Away from work Shae is likely to be out in the wilderness hunting - he has a passion for chasing tahr in the mountains. Another passion is rugby - he enjoys attempting to get the ball between the posts during the off season.



Sarah Davidson joined the Southern Biosecurity team in November. Sarah comes to Environment

Canterbury from the Central Otago District Council, having also spent time working in biosecurity with Environment Southland. Originally from Roxburgh, Sarah is a keen outdoors person - hunting, fishing, trail and mountain running.

Biosecurity in Action - Keep it Clean

Protect livelihoods

Make sure you follow a property's biosecurity procedures. If they don't have any, still do your bit. Make sure your boots or any machinery are free of soil and seed before entering the property. Before you and/or your machinery leave, clean it and personal items on site. This ensures that pest species trying to hitch a ride stay on site and are not spread to the next property.

Protect recreational and back country locations

Enter these special sites with clean vehicles, bikes, boots and clean these items before venturing into another location. If there is biosecurity signage, follow the instructions on the sign.

Protect marine environments

Make sure your boat hull is clean before travelling to other parts of the coastline. Anti-foul your hull once a year. Make sure your anti-fouling paint is in good condition. There should be no more than a light slime layer at any time.

If you think you have found a marine pest, call the MPI Hotline, 0800 809 966

Protect waterways

Always clean your gear between waterways. This prevents a wide range of freshwater pests from hitching a ride with you to a new location.

For information on how to clean a range of aquatic equipment, visit www.mpi.govt.nz/checkcleandry

What's the Biosecurity team up to?



Summer is a very busy season for our Biosecurity field staff. Biosecurity officers from the Southern, Central and Northern teams have been moving around the region supporting each other to complete our biosecurity projects efficiently.

Key projects we are focusing on over summer include the nassella compliance programme and search and control programmes for these pest species - Chilean needle grass, African love grass, African feather grass, bur daisy, saffron thistle, wild thyme, puna grass, purple loosestrife and yellow water lily. We are also conducting rabbit night counts and wallaby inspections.

Thank you!

We have been very busy implementing the region's nassella tussock compliance programme. We acknowledge and thank all those landowners who consistently meet their obligation to complete an annual nassella control programme, on time and to a good standard. We are doing our best to protect your control investment by working through the compliance process with the few landowners who, consistently choose not to complete their annual control programme on time, or to standard.

Thank you to everyone who has reported suspected sightings of a range of pest species. Your sightings help us find new pest incursions, allowing an opportunity to prevent further spread. With 4,534,600 hectares in Canterbury and 14 Biosecurity field officers for the region, the more eyes the better for protecting Canterbury's economy and environment from invasive species.

When not to have a wild thyme



Wild thyme scattered among native species on the Rangitata River

Wild thyme in Alexandra

Otago's Alexandra is covered in wild thyme, leaving very little room for native species to germinate. Although wild thyme smells amazing and is beautiful, it is an aggressive pest. It is tolerant of very dry sites and can out-compete native species if left to its own devices.

Environment Canterbury has been working to contain and reduce a wild thyme infestation on the Rangitata River since 1981. We carry out control by hand grubbing and our persistence has resulted in numbers decreasing. An infestation in the North Loburn area of North Canterbury has also been the target of annual control for many years, with a dramatic reduction in plant numbers.

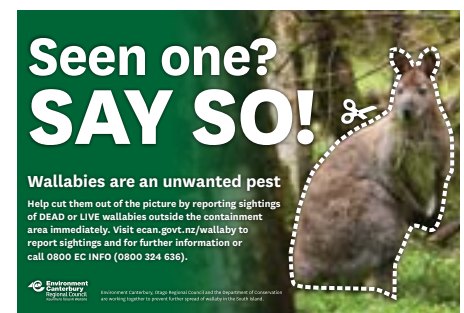
When travelling to the back country, please arrive with a mud-free vehicle and boots. These are the worst culprits for spreading unwanted organisms into pristine areas.

Working together to stop the spread

Environment Canterbury is working with Otago Regional Council (ORC) and Landcare Research on containing wallaby spread and abundance.

With an increase in the number of wallaby sightings in North Otago, a Sustainable Farming Fund (SFF) project led by Landcare Research will start in the 2017/18 financial year. The project aims to improve wallaby surveillance and control.

ORC is testing the use of trained wallaby detection dogs to improve tracking and surveillance.



A South Island researcher is working towards a biological control solution and ORC is investigating this further. A working group consisting of representatives from MPI, Landcare Research, Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Waikato Regional Council, ORC and Environment Canterbury is working on a business case for a National Wallaby Strategy.

Human spread remains a concern. We believe this has contributed to wallaby spread over the last few years. Signs (pictured) will be erected throughout Canterbury in locations outside the wallaby containment zone in coming months.

If you see a wallaby outside the containment zone, call 0800 EC INFO or report it at www.ecan.govt.nz/wallaby.

On the look-out for pests

The Biosecurity team would like to hear from you if you have seen any of these plants in Canterbury's natural environment. Please contact us on 0800 EC INFO to report it.

For more images, visit www.weedbusters.org.nz or www.ecan.govt.nz and search on plant name.



Wild thyme
Thymus vulgaris



Purple loosestrife
Lithrum salicaria



African love grass
Eragrostis curvula



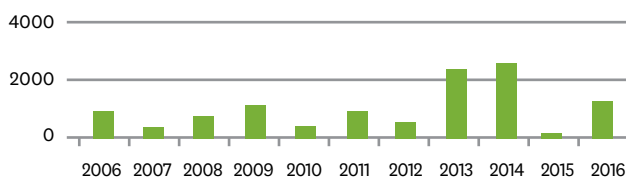
Spartina
Spartina anglica



Bur daisy
Calotis lappulacea

African love grass

Love grass tallies over time



This pesky weed won't make a love potion or find you true love! African love grass (ALG) is a rugged weed that can tolerate drought, disturbance, hot temperatures to hard frost, and poor and acidic soils. Intolerant of wet sites, it thrives in the dry Canterbury high country air where it germinates in spring and autumn, developing tiny seeds that catch in the wind, wool or anything it can get its teeth into.

The Southern Biosecurity team has the only two known sites in the region, one a small, easy-to-access area and another on a hill country property. The team cuts and bags the seed heads, then grubs out the plant. The aim is to eradicate African love grass. The graph above shows plant numbers controlled since 2006.



Community pest reports invaluable



Purple loosestrife infestation



Purple loosestrife flower

A report from a community member of purple loosestrife in an Early Valley drain beside the rail trail on Banks Peninsula will see the Biosecurity team undertake a search

and control programme in the area over summer to establish the source and make sure plants are controlled. We do not want purple loosestrife establishing in Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere.

Purple loosestrife rapidly degrades wetlands when left to create a monoculture, seriously impacting biological diversity. There is concern internationally about the pest's ability to also invade drier pasture sites, reducing available resources for crops and animal feed.

The Department of Conservation, Christchurch City Council and Environment Canterbury have been working together to reduce purple loosestrife populations throughout Canterbury, with the long-term aim of elimination.

Your reported sightings of this and other pest species are invaluable to the Biosecurity team.

Please call Environment Canterbury on 0800 324 636 (0800 ECINFO).

Who do I call?

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