

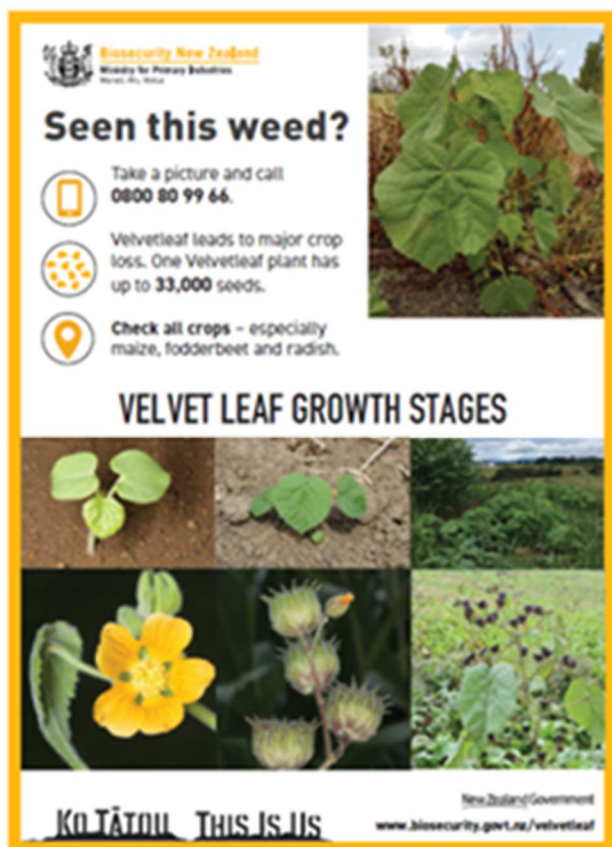
REGIONAL BIOSECURITY UPDATE – February 2022

VELVETLEAF

Velvetleaf (*Abutilon theophrasti*) is a cropping weed that can cause significant production losses through reduced forage crop yields. If velvetleaf infestations are not contained, the economic impact on NZ could be a reduced value of real gross national product (GDP), of between \$294.4 and \$484.7 million by 2030.

MPI lead and fund the programme for a containment strategy until the end of June 2023.

February – March is a good time to be on the lookout for Velvet Leaf. If you see it, report it.



<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/biosecurity/long-term-biosecurity-management-programmes/velvetleaf/#overview>

BIOSECURITY ACT REVIEW - UPDATE

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) has advised the Biosecurity Act review discussion document has been finalised, MPI will be seeking public feedback. This is now likely to occur in early to mid-2022.

FERAL ANIMAL MANGAGEMENT

There is widespread concern across agencies and the public alike about the increasing numbers of feral ungulates (deer, pigs, and goats). Localised individuals and groups are calling for something to be done about these animals. Environment Canterbury is receiving increasing enquiries requesting assistance with the control of feral ungulates.

Often there is confusion about which group or agency (if any) has responsibility for control. In some areas landowners have grouped together and undertaken collaborative control operations. This tends to be more often on open farmland than privately owned native forested land.

A higher-level agency meeting is planned for late February.

Desired meeting outcomes.

- Agencies have a common understanding of current policy and responsibilities.
- Agencies can provide landowners and community groups with consistent information to manage their expectations about responsibilities for feral ungulate management.
- Some understanding of what is realistic for reducing and maintaining future population densities of these animals.
- How can we work together?

NASSELLA TUSSOCK – NEW INFESTATIONS

Reports of two new infestations of Nassella tussock have been reported in South Canterbury on properties not previously known to have this plant. One of these properties has approximately 35 hectares of moderate to dense Nassella tussock infestations with scattered plants and patches outside of this area. Most of the plants are of considerable size and have been present for some decades.



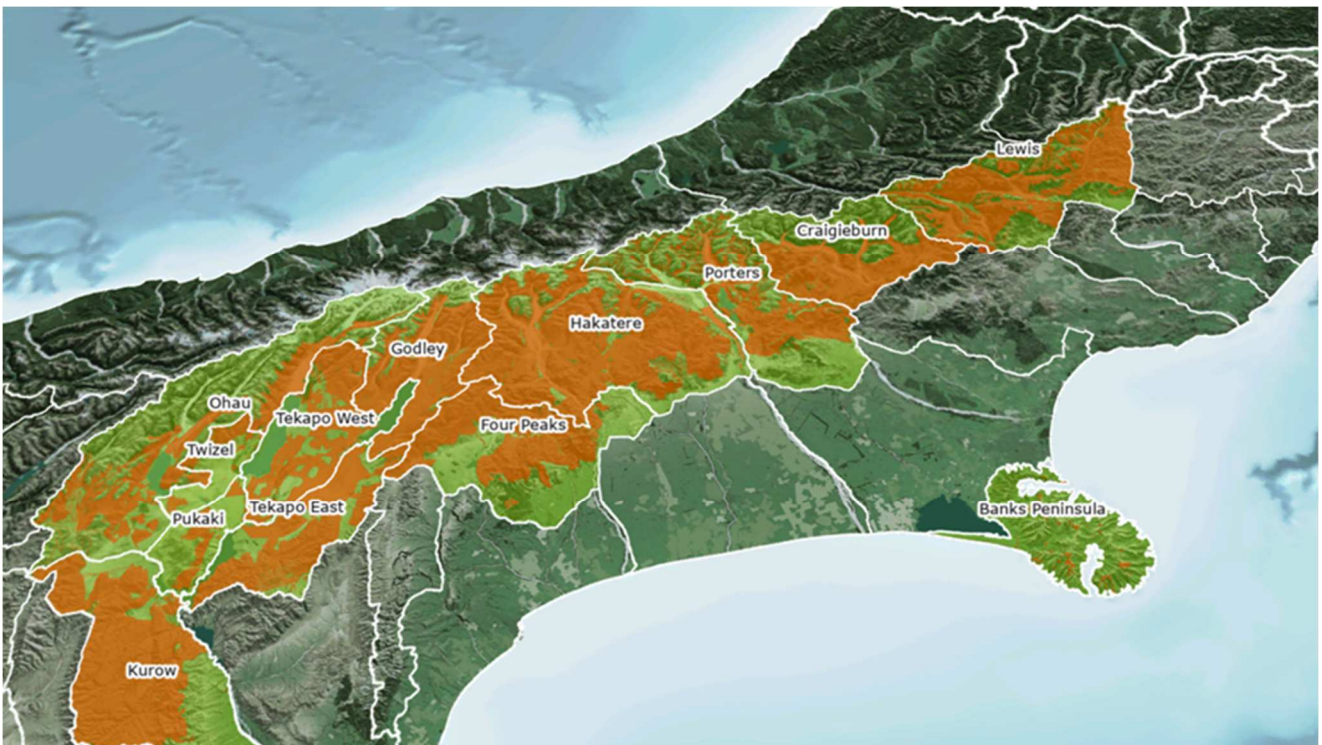
NATIONAL WILDING CONIFER CONTROL PROGRAMME

Background

- The National Wilding Conifer Strategy 2015-2030 was launched in 2014 providing a nationally coordinated view on the risks of wilding conifers and programme to defeat them.
- It's a foundation document for the Programme and sets out a shared vision "the right tree in the right place"
- The Programme commenced in 2016 with Crown funding through Biosecurity NZ. The Wilding Conifer Programme is a collaborative effort between MPI, DoC, LINZ, NZ Defence Force, community, farming, production forestry and Regional Councils led by Biosecurity NZ

Progress

- Budget 2021-22 \$13.9m
- Expenditure \$7.6m
- Committed \$10.3m (actual plus contracted expenditure)
- 74% of control programme completed
- 188 contracting staff deployed.



Programme work completed to date depicted in orange

GREAT WILLOWHERB – Be on the lookout

The rapidly spreading weed, great willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), has been found at several locations in Canterbury. Biosecurity New Zealand is leading the effort to eradicate this pest from New Zealand.

Great willowherb is an aggressive invader of wetlands and rivers and if left alone, has the potential to spread and damage these environments.

Now is the time of year to be on the lookout for Great willowherb. Situation update attached.

See fact sheet at <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/45019/direct>

If you think you have found great willowherb plants, do not attempt to remove them. Take a photo, record the location, and call Biosecurity New Zealand's exotic pest and disease hotline on 0800 80 99 66.

CHECK CLEAN DRY – PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF LAKE WEEDS

The 2021/22 summer Check Clean Dry (CCD) campaign saw a lack of events due to the Covid-19 restrictions, we took this as an opportunity to pursue alternative avenues and engage with a broader range of users. These included networking with national outdoor-sport retailers like Kathmandu, Torpedo 7 and Macpac, reaching out to District Councils and engaging with local clubs and youth committees.

This year, Environment Canterbury took on two new advocates to cover the entirety of Canterbury during the key holiday period, rather than restricting face to face advocacy to south Canterbury over Christmas and New Year. This allowed for a more holistic understanding of the level of engagement and awareness the public have of freshwater pests in Canterbury, and better coverage of the region's broad geography. Greater numbers of people could be reached, with varying levels of experience and awareness. In comparison to previous years, a broad range of users were familiar with the campaign, particularly at the mention of didymo. However, a concentrated effort was made by the advocates to move the conversation away from didymo and bring attention to more unfamiliar pests including Lagarosiphon, Elodea, Lake Snow, Rudd and Egeria.

Key Observations experienced by both advocates in Canterbury were:

1. Almost everyone spoken to across Canterbury was familiar with didymo
2. Few people were aware of the other pests such as Lagarosiphon, Elodea, Rudd, etc.
3. Most people agreed CCD was important to keep waterways clean
4. Most people tend to stay in one waterway or have little movement between water bodies
5. Many people who did not CCD in North Canterbury were unaware of the campaign and had little knowledge of the impacts of other freshwater pests
6. Having visual aids was particularly useful in getting the message across, such as using an A4 laminated sheet with photos and displaying sample weeds found on site
7. Many were interested in how the pest fish were having an impact on waterways and what was being done to eradicate the pests
8. The floating cork keyrings were very popular and a great conversation starter

Key Successes for this season were:

1. Alternative avenues were explored in targeting a wider range of freshwater users including 4WD clubs, big-chain outdoor retailers, District Councils, youth organisations and outdoor education centers
2. The majority of District Councils approached were in support of the campaign and distributed the CCD message via their internal communications network
3. There was an increased awareness of freshwater pests and how to CCD in the North Canterbury region
4. Many local jet ski outlets were on board with the CCD campaign and accepted collateral to distribute to customers
5. New connections as far north as Kaikoura accepted the CCD campaign and distributed collateral
6. Comments were made that the CCD was well advertised via prolific signage
7. New, user targeted signage was erected at remote locations aimed at addressing specific audiences

Regional report prepared by

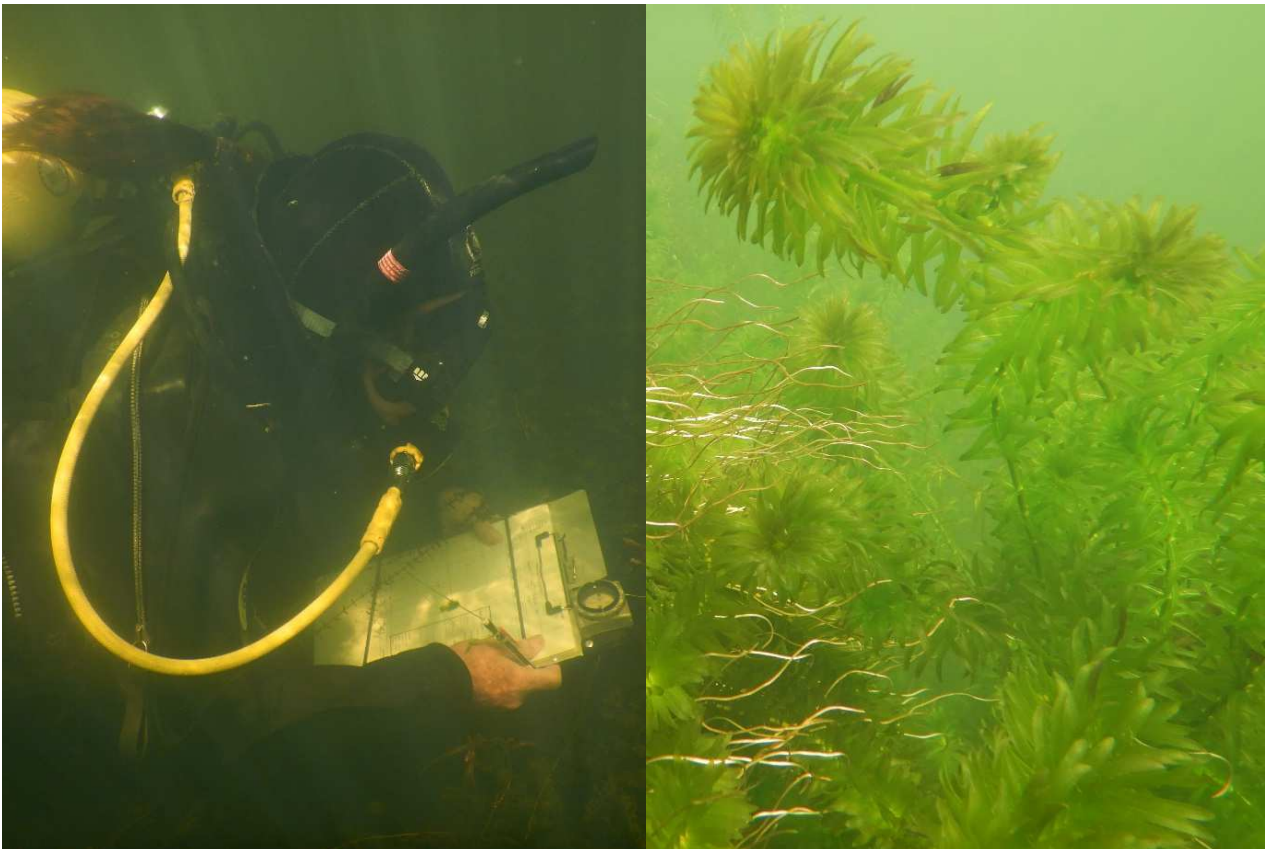
Laurence Smith, Principal Advisor - Biosecurity

AREA BIOSECURITY UPDATE – December 2021

Egeria (Eradication Programme)

Egeria occurs in the Avon River at Kerrs Reach. Egeria is a significant threat to freshwater aquatic native biodiversity and recreational activities.

NIWA completed a dive survey through Kerrs reach and upstream. There is extensive Egeria cover in places (deeper areas where weed harvester can't reach). Egeria was detected in oxbow beside the rowing club and channel near the pump station. The furthest upstream point is adjacent to Snell Place. The pump station channel is high risk.



Photo's courtesy of NIWA

2 quotes have been received for controlling egeria. Both are approximately \$17k per spray operation. For effective control 2 spray operations are needed this financial year including follow up dive survey. An additional \$10k has been added to the budget from surveillance programme.

Purple Loosestrife (Sustained Control Programme)

A highly invasive pest that threatens native biodiversity and freshwater infrastructure. Purple Loosestrife grows on the margins of waterways, is easily spread, and can block streams and drains.

The Purple Loosestrife programme is a multi-agency effort combining the resources of DOC, CCC and ECan. Inspections are carried out through the summer months, and where found, control is undertaken annually.

Currently in the operational stage:

- Control undertaken in the Tai Tapu, Motukarara drains by Tai Tapu based ECan drain and waterway staff.
- Search of known and potential sites is undertaken by ECan, DoC and CCC staff.

A contractor has been arranged to control sections of Burkes drain and Macartney's Road drain down to the Halswell stream, as a follow up to work done by DOC.

Feral Rabbits (Sustained Control Programme)

Rabbits can cause loss of production in pasture and crops and at high densities can impact on biodiversity values.

A contractor has continued with monitoring and control work within the Banks Peninsula rating district. A November report submitted from the contractor as follows:

There have been persistent spells of rain over Banks Peninsula over the last 6 weeks, leading to many paddocks with waist high grass. The cutting of hay has been delayed on many properties with some having cut but being unable to bail.

There have been reports of young rabbits showing up with some decent sized litters, the mortality of these rabbits will be high with the long-wet grass.

The previous RHD release sites are still holding well, and we are still receiving positive feedback from these farmers.

Feral Goats (Site Led Programme)

Environment Canterbury support the Feral Goat removal project led by the Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust. Land occupiers with goats are made aware of the choices available to either comply with Canterbury Regional Pest Management Plan rules to adequately fence and ensure goats are identifiable or participate in the Trusts removal programme.

Goat removal operation planned for 2021 / 2022 financial year by the Goat Working Group as follows:

Goat removal is planned at Peraki Station in Autumn 2022. Not all landowners may support the operation so careful, considered communications will be needed. Covid Red Light Status and the vaccination status of contractors has been discussed as this could be potential cause for disruption to the planned programme re property access. The Goat Working Groups general feeling is for the work to go ahead as planned and deal with issues as they arise.

Old Man's Beard (Site Led Programme)

Land occupiers who have received funded control on their property through the Site Led programme since 2018/19 have been reminded via email to ensure they undertake spraying of new/young growth.

Plans for aerial control and ground control in Governors Bay are to be confirmed once internal COVID policy is clarified to enable survey.

Plans are underway to organise contract requirements for the remaining sites on Banks Peninsula.

Cathedral Bells (Site Led programme)

Cathedral bells can impact on native biodiversity by smothering desirable native plant species. It is known to have a very limited occurrence in Canterbury. Environment Canterbury are endeavouring to ensure plants do not spread by undertaking annual control at all known sites.



One small patch located in Akaroa has been reinspected after control last season. Seedlings found were pulled by hand and search of surrounding area was undertaken.

Saffron Thistle (Progressive Control Programme)

Once established, saffron thistle can form dense stands, preventing stock movement and competing with pasture species. The sharp spines of this yellow flowered thistle can cause injuries to the eyes and mouths of stock and get stuck in wool. Due to this, saffron thistle can cause adverse effects on economic well-being.

Infestations are limited to 13 active sites scattered across approximately 378 hectares, mainly north of the Rakaia River.

Inspection and control have been undertaken on 4 properties near Tai Tapu on the lower slopes of the hills and 3 properties in the McQueens Valley – Kaituna Valley area. These are known sites

where on-going control is required. A contractor has been engaged to control the larger infestations using herbicide where grubbing and bagging plants is not practical.

Puna Grass (Eradication Programme)

Puna grass is tussock-like (similar to Nassella tussock) with purplish-brown flowers and a fibrous root system. Puna grass is a pastoral weed and invades riparian and other non-grazed areas. It is not particularly palatable to stock, is spread by seed and is difficult to control once established. Puna grass causes adverse effects to economic well-being due to loss of pastoral agriculture in the hill and high country. It also causes adverse effects on environmental values in tussock landscapes and grasslands.

Puna grass is scattered across 60 hectares at two sites within the region.

There is one site in the Christchurch area in Bromley. Search and control by Biosecurity Officers has been undertaken involving the grubbing and bagging of plants. Although the site is contained there continues to be many plants removed annually.

Chilean needle grass (Sustained Control Programme)

Chilean needle grass occurs over 24 properties in canterbury with 330 hectares affected in total.

One property in West Melton has had numerous inspections this year to eliminate Chilean needle grass plants prior to seeding. Almost all plants have been found in the known areas of the property. Biosecurity officers are working closely with the landowners to ensure Chilean needle grass is contained.

This season has been quite wet which has seen more frequent germination of seed in the ground. This extends the growing season which in turn requires more than usual visits to eliminate plants

Local area report prepared by:

Bruce Marshall, Team Leader - Biosecurity