

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). Local 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?

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 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 (by Rich Langley)

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 just didymo to bring attention to more unfamiliar pests including lagarosiphon, elodea, lake snow, rudd and egeria.

Key Observations experienced by both advocates in Canterbury were:

1. Most people agreed CCD was important to keep waterways clean
2. Most people tend to stay in one waterway or have little movement between water bodies
3. 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
4. Having visual aids was particularly useful in getting the message across, such as using laminated photos and displaying sample weeds found on site
5. Many were interested in how pest fish have an impact on waterways and what was being done to manage these pests nationally

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 centres
2. Most of the 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 were interested in engaging with the CCD campaign and distributed collateral
6. Comments were made that the CCD message was well advertised via prolific signage
7. New, user targeted signage was erected at remote locations aimed at addressing specific audiences

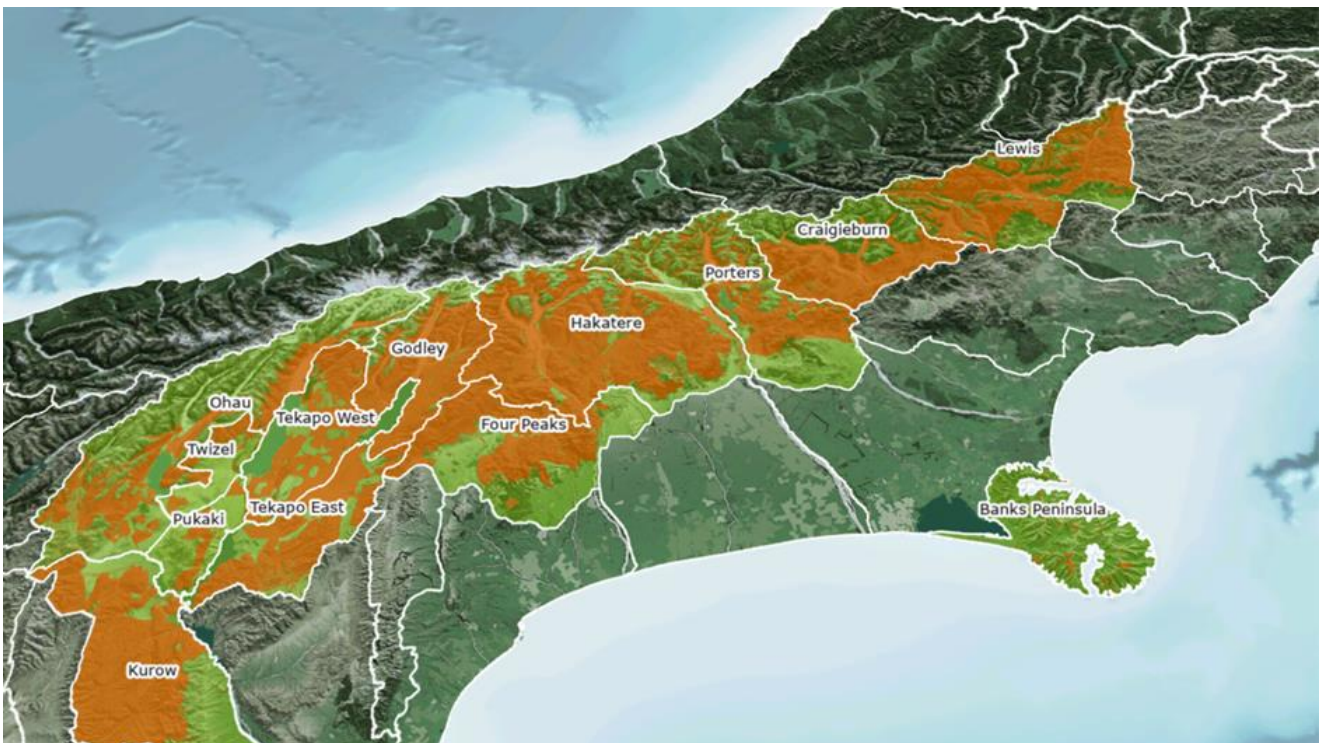
NATIONAL WILDING CONIFER CONTROL PROGRAMME

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

Regional report prepared by:

Laurence Smith, Principal Advisor – Biosecurity

AREA BIOSECURITY UPDATE – February 2022

Yellow Water Lily (Eradication programme)

Dense growth of yellow water lily chokes streams, shallow ponds, and lake margins, (still or slow-flowing water less than 2m deep) causing flooding by impeding drainage. Shades out other plants, reduces nutrient availability, and alters the habitat for other organisms.

Control work is due to be carried out in the next month on the Yellow Water Lily site at Hazelburn.

African Love Grass (Progressive Containment programme)

African love grass rapidly invades bare and disturbed sites and forms dense stands that prevent the establishment of native species.

Search and control work at the African Love Grass site near Omarama was carried out just prior to Christmas. Further control and search is being carried out in the last week of February. African love grass is beginning to be found in other areas in Canterbury. Surveillance and investigation activities are to be actioned, and these will inform any pathway management initiatives.

Rabbits (Sustained Control Programme)

Rabbits can cause loss of production in pastures and crops. At high densities rabbits can cause erosion and impact on biodiversity values.

Rabbit inspections have commenced in rabbit prone areas. Those properties under Notice of Direction are also being reinspected and rabbit control programmes are being initiated for control.

Darwin's Barberry (Sustained Control Programme)

Darwin's Barberry is a long-lived plant, with well-dispersed (birds) seeds. Tolerates moderate to cold temperatures, damp to dry conditions, high wind, salt, shade, damage, grazing (not browsed), and a range of soils. Invades disturbed forest and shrubland, short tussock land, and bare land.

The southern Biosecurity team are working on a partnership programme with landowners, community groups, Department of Conservation, and other areas of Environment Canterbury to focus on Darwin's Barberry where it is growing in areas of natural ecological significance in the district. They have engaged contractors in sustained control.

Nassella Tussock (Sustained Control Programme) Nassella tussock is extremely adaptable and can be found growing in open grasslands. It is unpalatable to stock and will displace other plant species. Mature plants can produce up to 120,000 seeds which are dispersed by wind, water, stock, clothing, and machinery.

New Nassella tussock infestations



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 in the Duntroon area has approximately 35 hectares of moderate to dense Nassella tussock infestations with scattered plants and patches over approximately 50% of the 800-hectare property. Most of the plants are of considerable size and have been present for some decades. Environment Canterbury is working with the landowners in the area on education, control and surveillance activities.

Local report prepared by:

Gina Slee

Team Leader – Biosecurity, Southern