

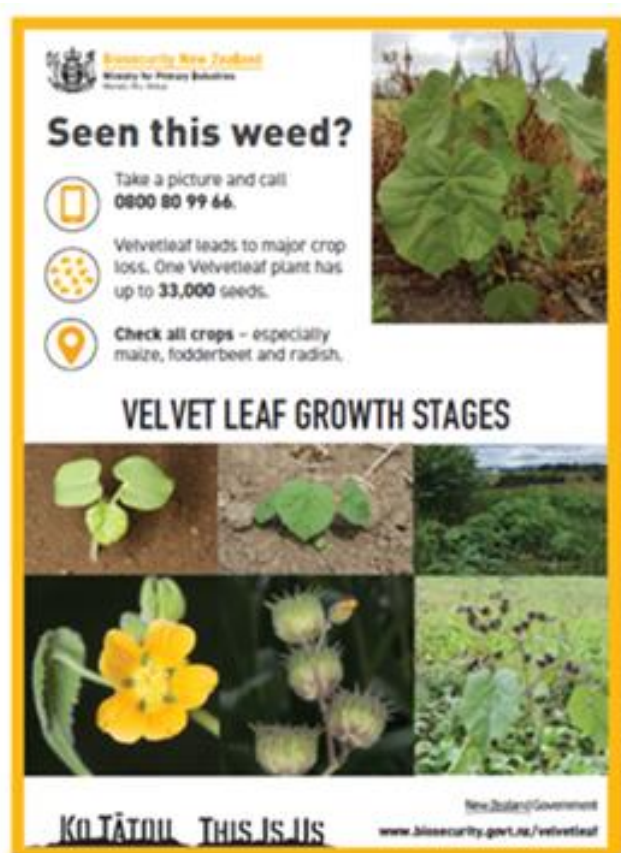
REGIONAL BIOSECURITY UPDATE – MARCH 2022

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 was held on 10 March 2022.

This was a successful meeting for developing a better understanding of where, how and why various agencies and organisations are working towards addressing the issue of feral ungulate spread. The Department of Conservation is investing resources to develop a strategy attempting to direct a collaborative approach to this issue that involves the community and honors a diverse range of values.

It was promising to get a commitment from those present to keep this conversation going in future and look to support the development of resources that can deliver options for land occupiers and communities.

NASSELLA TUSsock – NEW 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 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.



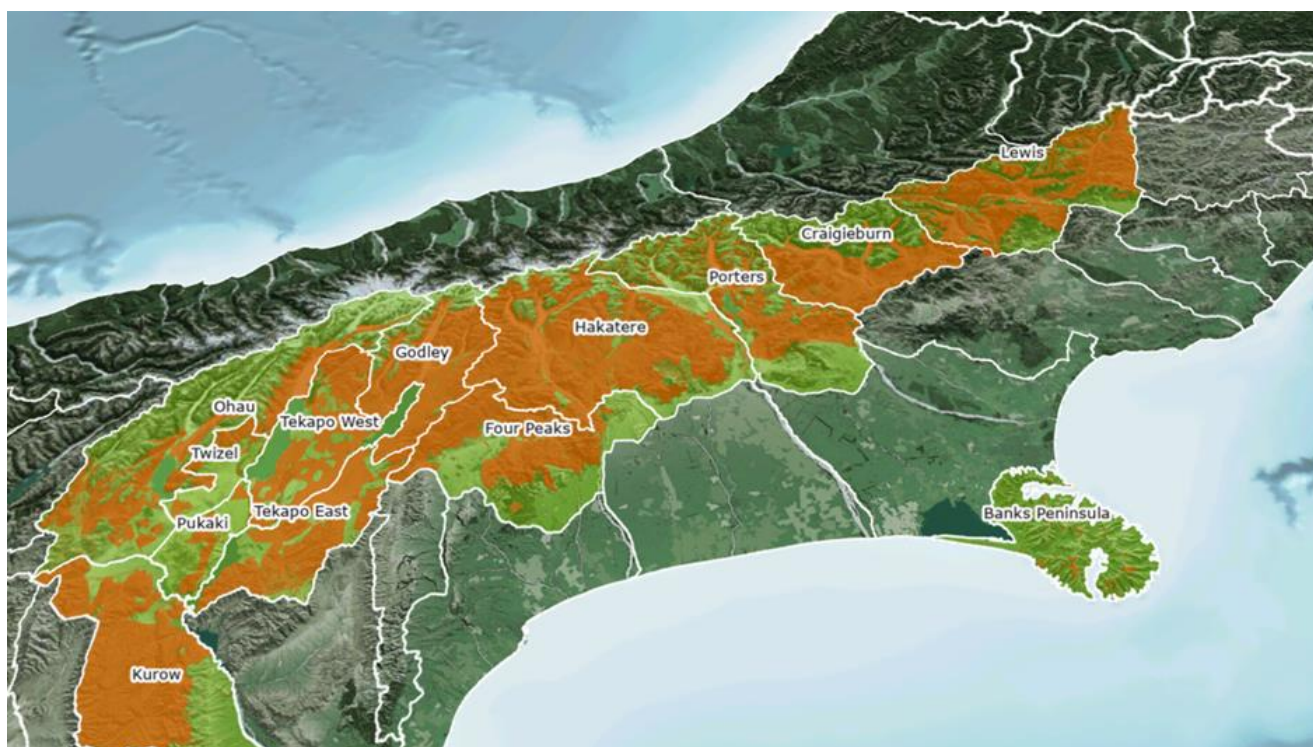
NATIONAL WILDING CONIFER CONTROL PROGRAMME

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 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 retails, 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

Report prepared by

Laurence Smith, Principal Advisor - Biosecurity

Central Area Update March 2022

SAFFRON THISTLE (Progressive Control Programme)

Once established, the yellow flowering 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.

The sharp spines 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. The large seeds spread easily by stock, water, vehicles and in dirt to other locations. The whole plant can also break off at the base and be blown for long distances, further spreading seed. Seed can remain viable in the soil for up to 8 years.

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

Currently one site in the central region located McLeans Island. Site searched and plants grubbed and bagged.

GORSE AND BROOM (Sustained Control Programme)

Focus on the hill and high country as described in the CRPMP. Emphasis on boundary rules and keeping productive clear land free of Gorse and Broom.

Biosecurity officers' respond to complaints from neighbours, educate land occupiers of best practise management, complete inspections of properties and follow up with enforcement of rules when required.

NASSELLA TUSSOCK (Sustained Control Programme)

Nassella tussock is extremely adaptable and grows in a wide range of habitats. It will displace other plant species. Nassella tussock is unpalatable to stock. A mature nassella tussock can produce up to 120,000 seeds which are able to disperse over long distances by wind, water borne, animals, human beings (on clothing), on machinery and in agricultural seed.

Nassella tussock is known to have occurred on approximately 1450 properties across Canterbury. This season 384 properties have been inspected to ensure Nassella tussock has been adequately controlled. 60 land occupiers were asked to carry out further where significant numbers of live Nassella tussock plants have been found.

This year, in the Hurunui District, there has been a noticeable increase of land occupiers leaving Nassella tussock plants to seed before completing control work, which could impact on other landowners across Canterbury through the movement of seed.

36 properties were inspected in the Central area this season with 5 properties asked to carry out more work to control Nassella tussock plants.

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL OF PLANTS (Regional programme)

Biosecurity Officers undertook a survey of sites where biological control agents have been released in the past so Landcare Research can assess their impacts and effectiveness.

In the Central area sites assessed included: Broom Gall Mite - 4 locations and Nodding Thistle Crown Root Weevil at 4 locations all in the Selwyn/Rakia area.



Thistle showing the effects of crown weevil

Broom Gall Mite visible on plant

Photos taken by Biosecurity Officer (Abbie Roper) at time of survey

CHILEAN NEEDLE GRASS (Sustained Control Programme)

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

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 landowner to ensure Chilean needle grass is contained. Biosecurity staff have conducted several inspections during December and January. Control by spraying herbicide, grubbing and bagging plants

Although the area of infestation is relatively small (approx. 1ha) the plant remains very difficult to control. Search of nearby paddocks indicates that the infestation remains contained.

NATIONAL WALLABY ERADICATION PROGRAMME

Below communication released by Brent Glentworth, Environment Canterbury Wallaby Programme Lead

Just a quick email to advise of findings from our recent search for Bennett's wallaby in your area.

No wallaby or wallaby sign were found at the time.

During the week 10 Jan to 14 January an experienced wallaby contractor team searched several areas, (their tracking marked in blue on the attached Castle Hill wallaby search map below).

The areas covered were adjacent to suitable wallaby cover, where we would expect to find wallaby sign if searching in the feral range here in south Canterbury. This is only an indicative result - and although good the nothing was found ...it doesn't mean wallaby are not present in very low numbers.

With a couple of solid live reports being sighted over the last few years, it maybe that an escaped pet or the odd released wallaby is present or passed through. If this is the case, hopefully it's not enough to stem a new population.

We are confident that some of the local reports of roadkill wallaby, are dumped shot individuals taken from down this way. Unfortunately, this is not that uncommon, occurring throughout Canterbury.

Thank you to all Landowners and Dept of Conservation staff who provided access and information. If any further wallaby are seen, please continue to report them on reportwallabies.nz. Do not hesitate to get in contact if you have any questions.

Report prepared by

Bruce Marshall, Team Leader - Biosecurity

Map showing areas searched for Wallaby in the Central Area. The search track is indicated by the blue line.

