

July 2018

Shining the light on Innovation

A quarterly update - Weed Management Policy



In July 2018, Auckland Council staff attended the “Shining the Light on Innovation” biosecurity conference in Nelson, coinciding with Biosecurity Week. The conference provided opportunities to support best practice, share innovations in biosecurity, hear case studies, and was an opportunity for partnership and collaboration across the country. The speakers and attendees included local and central government staff and industries involved in biosecurity, including pest plant control.

Auckland Council’s Biosecurity unit prioritises our pest plants through the regional pest management strategy. Our weed management policy applies to the management of all pest plants listed in the strategy. Since 1769, up to 30,000 exotic plant species have been introduced to New Zealand. Exotic plants with no natural enemies can spread unchecked, displacing native plants and threatening biodiversity requiring control by biosecurity organisations. Auckland’s temperate climate makes us particularly vulnerable to weeds, which means that we live in one of the weediest cities in the world.

Opportunities identified at the conference to support best practice in weed control by Auckland Council included “train the trainer” workshops, digital tools, community engagement and presentations by the Auckland Council Best Practice Reference Group.



New Zealand Biosecurity Institute

The mission of the institute is “Working together to ensure New Zealand is protected from the adverse impacts of invasive species.”

The key message for conference was “For the Institute and the wider biosecurity system to achieve these aims, it requires people. Much of what we do needs people collaborating, people trying a new method, speaking up about a new idea and people taking a risk!”

New Zealand’s Biosecurity System

At the conference the five strategic directions of New Zealand’s biosecurity system were presented by Dr Andrew Bell from the Ministry of Primary Industries. Read the full Biosecurity 2025 Direction Statement [here](#)



A biosecurity team of 4.7 million – A collective effort across the country. Every New Zealander becomes biosecurity risk manager and every business manages their own biosecurity risk



A toolbox for tomorrow – Harnessing science and technology to transform the way we do biosecurity



Smart, free-flowing information – Tapping into the wealth of data available, building intelligence, and using powerful data analysis to underpin risk management.



Effective leadership and governance – System-wide leadership and inclusive governance to support all system participants in their roles



Tomorrow's skills and assets – A capable and sustainable workforce and world-class infrastructure provides the foundation for an effective system.

Links to Auckland Council's Weed Management Policy and Practice

Auckland Council and its biosecurity activities are part of the New Zealand Biosecurity system. The council's Weed Management Policy gives operational guidance for council to complete the pest plant control activities required for biosecurity including promoting best practice, the minimisation of agrichemical use, and coordination of community groups.

The Weed Management Policy also includes a 42 point action plan which sets out the range of tasks and actions that we will carry out to implement the vision and objectives of the policy. An alignment can be seen with this plan and the biosecurity direction statement, including the actions to:

- *develop initiatives around educating mana whenua and the public on how to eliminate weeds and prevent weeds establishing or re-establishing on their land, and provide information that encourages the planting of appropriate non-weedy, preferably native, plant species*
- *locate populations of Total Control Pest Plants and any new weed species incursions across the region, with the objective of eradication*
- *encourage collaboration between existing weed control programmes and initiatives across Auckland to prevent and control weeds, improve ecological health and increase community participation in weed management operation.*
- *form a governance group which will oversee the implementation and delivery of the Weed Management Policy*

Conference Highlights

Auckland Council staff attending the conference heard from speakers covering case studies, innovation, biocontrol and collaboration supporting Best Practice in Weed Management across New Zealand. Highlights relating to weed management activities were:

Community-led weed management was profiled in a presentation by the Project Devine Trust. The trust's mission is "clearing the pest vines out of golden bay and around Abel Tasman and Kahurangi national parks". Neil Clifton shared the background and success of volunteer and government agency cooperation for species led landscape scale weed control.

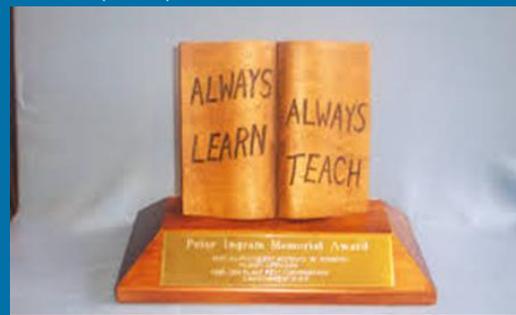
Local government collaborating with industry. John Mather presented on managing wild kiwifruit in the Bay of Plenty. Kiwifruit is a containment pest under the Bay of Plenty Regional Pest Management Plan, which requires the landowner to control. The kiwifruit industry has set up Kiwifruit Vine Health whose responsibilities include the management of wildling kiwifruit. To assist landowners, the council and Kiwifruit Vine Health contribute to the cost of control, up to 75 per cent if approved contractors are used.

Biocontrol for both plant and animal pest species was presented on at the conference, including a folivorous (leaf-eating) beetle that was introduced for the control of Californian Thistle. Mike Cripp spoke on how beetles' population growth has had different levels of successes in different locations around New Zealand. This provided useful insights for council's future biocontrol initiatives.

Peter Ingram Award

This award is given to a member of the Biosecurity Institute who has undertaken or enabled others to achieve, relevant to pest plant education, control or management.

Three members of the Auckland Council Best Practice Reference Group have received this award: Margaret Stanley in 2004, Paul Champion (2007) and Trevor James (2013).



Case studies included a member of Auckland Council's Best Practice Reference Group, Trevor James, spoke on controlling velvet leaf. His case study covered the different aspects of controlling a pest plant including:

- Monitoring of the infestation sites
- Prevention including measures taken to stop the spread between farms,
- Understanding the different herbicide requirements.

New solutions for the control of submerged weeds were presented by another Best Practice Reference Group member, Paul Champion.

Auckland Council was represented by staff who spoke on Pest Free Auckland and how to coordinate volunteers to support biodiversity outcomes. Auckland Council biosecurity work was also highlighted to the group through a case study on using chickens as a biocontrol for rainbow skinks.

Best practice in weed control was supported by presentations from Weedbusters, government and industry experts on control methodologies.

Project Janszoon – The Abel Tasman National Park

As part of the conference, attendees were invited to join day trips to profile local biosecurity initiatives around the region.

Council staff went to the Abel Tasman National Park to understand more about Project Janszoon. The project is the result of a partnership between a privately funded trust, the Department of Conservation, the Abel Tasman Birdsong Trust, the community and local iwi. The project vision is to restore the ecology of the Abel Tasman National Park over a 30-year time frame.

The project was initially set up by the <http://www.nextfoundation.org.nz/> with a \$25 million grant. Former project director Devon McLean spoke at the conference on the [Tomorrow Accord](#), a commitment of government resource to preserve the gains made by the project.

The field trip gave more operational detail on the project including the weed control programme that has focused on controlling 65 weed species. There were some familiar species to Auckland, including tradescantia, periwinkle and cotoneaster. Chinese privet has also been a target.

Ongoing collaboration towards implementing the Weed Management Policy

The conference was a great opportunity to learn what other councils and agencies are doing in pest plant management. Staff identified some key opportunities for collaboration:

- Northland Council has developed an online regional pest management tool, Pest Control hub. This is an engaging way to display pest organisms and includes a reporting mechanism. Auckland Council staff are investigating the possibility of a local version.
- A representative from Weedbusters presented on their "Train the trainer workshops" programme to support best practice in pest plant management. These workshops could provide opportunity for council to support best practice with our community groups.
- Wellington City Council's Ilona Keenan spoke at the conference on her project using art to raise public awareness of pest plants. Auckland Council staff will explore how art could be used within the Auckland region for this purpose.

