

## 21. *Plant Pest Control*

### **Explanation**

The Conservation Act 1987 requires the Department to manage all land and natural resources held under the Act for the purpose of maintaining their intrinsic value. Protected-areas legislation administered by the Department (Reserves Act 1977, National Parks Act 1980, Conservation Act 1987) also provides the basis and impetus for the management of weeds.

Plant pests are exotic plants that permanently alter the structure, successional processes, and organisms present in native plant communities.

The Department is bound by the transitional provisions of the Biosecurity Act 1993, whereby some sections of the Noxious Plants Act remain in force until 1996. The Department is thus required to carry out its obligations relating to Category B noxious plants until June 1996, unless a relevant weed pest strategy under the Biosecurity Act is developed in the intervening period.

The Biosecurity Act provides for the development of national and regional weed pest management strategies and their approval by regional authorities. Plants may be determined to be pests for a number of reasons, including their effects on the environment.

The Department will be involved in the development of weed pest management strategies, where appropriate, because of their significance for the Department's pest control work and its protection of natural and historic resources. For instance, the ability of the Department to control environmentally damaging plant pests within areas it manages is affected by the extent to which such plants are controlled beyond those areas.

### **Wellington Conservancy**

Considerable plant pest control resources are used to meet the needs of noxious plant control programmes under the provisions of the Biosecurity Act 1993, e.g., gorse and old man's beard. This is to be expected, considering the extent of the land area the Department manages.

Plant pest problems which impact on natural and historic resources are present in many if not most areas managed by the Department within the Conservancy. These impacts vary in severity between pest species and between habitats, depending on the plant pests involved and the communities where they are found. The most severe impacts appear to be in lowland ecosystems, in particular, in small remnant areas (e.g., mercer grass, pussy willow, crack willow, tall fescue and alder at Lake Wairarapa Wetlands; blackberry, pampas, broom and boxthorn at Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve; and boxthorn at Mana Island). Knowledge of the extent of these problems is incomplete.

The areas and the species where weeds are controlled are subject to an annual value/threat assessment to ascertain a priority schedule for the Business Plan. Priorities are determined by the values of natural and historic resources present, the threat the pest species poses and the Department's statutory obligations to control classified noxious plants on land it administers.

**Management  
Issues***Information*

Information on the extent of the Conservancy's plant pest problems is either non-existent or incomplete. Plant pest control programmes are limited to the control of particular plant pests on specific sites. Emphasis has been limited to those plant pests which have proven control methods, have been controlled either because their presence and impact are conspicuous (e.g., old man's beard), or because of the awareness of past and present staff to a particular plant pest problem. A Conservancy-wide assessment of weeds affecting areas managed by the Department is necessary if problems are to be identified and evaluated.

The Department will undertake a review and survey of the extent of plant pests in the conservancy and rank their significance in terms of the importance of the values to be protected, the degree of threat and the urgency for control.

*Control Techniques*

For some plant pest species control has never been attempted or the methods used have not been effectively evaluated. Therefore before implementing large scale control, methods must be assessed. When evaluating plant pest control methods, the Department takes into account efficiency and safety, both of operators and the environment, following normal industry directions and chemical standards. In some areas there is public sensitivity to certain plant pest control techniques. Some plants that are controlled as pests are used by tangata whenua.

The Department will establish procedures to ensure only effective plant pest control techniques are applied and untried techniques are tested first. The use of herbicides will follow industry guidelines. Alternatives to herbicides will be used wherever appropriate. Public consultation will be undertaken wherever public concern is expressed. Tangata whenua will be consulted to find out if their need for plants can assist plant pest control objectives.

*Framework of Plans and Procedures*

If the planning, implementation and the reporting of plant pest control programmes is to be complete and efficient, established procedures and an hierarchy of plans are needed. This is lacking.

Following a survey and evaluation of plant pest problems, the Department will prepare a Conservancy-wide plant pest control plan or strategy and subsequently operational plans for high priority areas in consultation with other agencies.

**Objectives**

- 1 Protection of the most valuable and most vulnerable areas managed by the Department, or parts of those areas, from those species of plant pests posing the greatest threat to the areas' natural and historic resources and sustainability.
- 2 Fulfilment of the legal requirements for plant pest control in annual plant pest control operations.

**Implementation**

- 1 Carry out a Conservancy-wide analysis of the presence and susceptibility of areas to plant pests, rank requirements for control and provide an estimate of the resources needed for effective control.

- 2 Prepare a Conservancy policy document on plant pest control procedures and plan requirements.
- 3 Prepare and implement a Conservancy plant pest control plan.
- 4 Prepare and implement operational plans for plant pest control for high priority areas and to monitor and report on the achievements of these programmes.
- 5 Participate, where appropriate, in the development of weed pest management strategies.
- 6 Review progress, direction and effectiveness, on an annual basis, of plant pest control strategies and objectives.
- 7 Liaise with regional councils regarding Class B plants in areas managed by the Department to identify appropriate control programmes.
- 8 Adhere to industry safety standards in storage and application of all chemicals and take particular care to evaluate any risks to non-target species in sensitive habitats.
- 9 Public awareness activities to inform the public of the damaging effects of plant pests, especially garden escapes, the means by which human actions can spread plant pests (e.g., rubbish disposal, seeds on clothing), ways to prevent the spread of plant pests, and the importance of plant pest control for protecting indigenous biodiversity.
- 10 Management and advocacy activities will be used to prevent the establishment of new plant pests in areas administered by the Department.