

Wayne O'Donnell
Manager, Biosecurity

Biosecurity Dept Report – for period ending 31 October 2006

1080 Re-assessment

GW were notified by ERMA on 1st November that they had accepted the reassessment application from the AHB and DoC. The application was publicly notified on 2nd November with submissions closing on 14th December.

The Biosecurity Department will prepare a submission and copy to all Committee members for comment before submitting to ERMA.

Pest Animals

1. Rooks

The annual aerial rook surveillance programme was undertaken on 20 September to check for the presence of active nesting sites. All historic sites were revisited together with other locations reported by the public following an extensive radio and newspaper media campaign. The survey disclosed 18 rookeries. There was only one rookery in the Pirinoa district with the remainder in the Masterton District. For the first time no rookeries were apparent in the eastern area between Castlepoint and Cape Palliser.

In spite of a thorough search and liaison with many occupiers no rookery has been located in the Makara – Ohariu District. On occasions locals have reported seeing flocks of between 6 and 20 rooks but no one has been able to confirm a permanent roost or breeding rookery. This surveillance effort gets to a stage where it is questionable whether the costs exceed any long-term benefits.

No rooks have been reported on the Kapiti Coast this year.

The nest baiting programme in the Wairarapa took place on 27 October, about three weeks later than usual. A strong persistent nor-westerly weather pattern during late September/early October disrupted breeding by blowing nests from the trees. All 18 known rookeries were visited with 168 nests disclosed. Eighty were empty of eggs or chicks. The remaining nests contained 29 with eggs and 59 with chicks. It is particularly difficult this year to assess the region's rook population but a guesstimate suggests around 600.

Horizons Regional Council is carrying out rook control in a similar manner in the Tararua District to complement our efforts.

2. Mustelids

The post winter season has brought on a host of calls for assistance with control of ferrets in particular, but also for stoats and weasels. The ever increasing number of lifestyle blocks with a range of poultry and small pets such as domestic rabbits and guinea pigs is a perfect environment for mustelids as they seek food to feed their young.

3. Magpies

The magpie breeding season also increases our response needs to removing the more provocative 'dive bombing' birds protecting their territories. Each situation is judged on its merits and birds are only removed if they have proved to be a persistent threat to the public, pets or livestock.

Traps (when available) are provided to persons that are considered trustworthy to adhere to protocols that protect the welfare and humaneness aspects of captured magpies. Instruction is provided about expected best practice.

Calls for assistance are coming in 'thick and fast'. Staff are not sure what has created this situation. However, it could be influenced by our campaign regarding rook sightings or perhaps there are just more magpies around.

4. New Poison Warning Signs

The new controls under the HASNO and ACVM Acts regarding public warning signs for selected vertebrate toxic agents (VTAs) took effect from 1 November this year. Both ERMA and the NZ Food Safety Group realise that there will be a transition period required to gradually replace the thousands of warning signs already in place. The main focus for possum and predator control is be fully compliant for all new operations and staff are now confident that they have interpreted the regulations correctly and have signage templates that will stand up to audit.

The wording and layout of the signage is required to be different for each VTA and for each bait type. For example it is no longer possible to have one sign for 1080 Poison. The sign has to state whether the bait type is carrot, pellets or paste and what colour the bait is. The cost of compliance may be considerable and will be spread out as long as possible.

The National Possum Control Agencies (NPCA) struggled to get agreement with agencies earlier this year as to what was required. After considerable further consultation with stakeholders the NPCA prepared best practice guidelines for the safe use and handling of VTAs, including a comprehensive chapter on warning signs. This set the standard for compliance on a national basis.

5. Protection of Pet Rabbits against RCD

The Rabbit Council of NZ (Inc.) has written to all regional council Biosecurity Managers seeking input into protecting domestic rabbits from rabbit calicivirus (RCD) by underwriting RCD vaccination programmes. The Rabbit Council is concerned about the increased risk to domestic rabbits through the use of RCD virus as a biocide. They believe that regional

councils should take responsibility for introducing the increased risk and should, therefore, be responsible for indemnifying domestic rabbit owners/breeders against the risk.

They also invite regional councils to support them in the reclassification of the RCD vaccine to enable the vaccine to be administered by anyone. Currently the vaccine must be administered by a vet and therefore incurs increased costs. The current cost of vaccinating an individual rabbit is between \$30 and \$40 which the Rabbit Council says is quite prohibitive for young people who are normally the owners of pets. They also say that it is extremely prohibitive for breeders to vaccinate large quantities of animals which have a small resale value.

The letter also states “We feel that before we have media involvement with pictures of children holding up their dead pets that perhaps a remedy can be found”.

Greater Wellington has not used RCD as a biocide. The rabbit calicivirus disease was disclosed in the region in October 1997 with sporadic outbreaks occurring throughout the region since then. There is a current outbreak at Makara and at Granada North (WCC). The Granada North area is where one of the first RCD outbreaks was registered on 22 January 1998. It is expected that further outbreaks will occur from time to time in spite of the wild rabbits gradually increasing their immunity levels.

Pest Plants

1. Eradication Species

1.1 Blue passion flower

Seven new infestations were located during this period. The majority of these were found following extended surveys around existing infestations. One substantial infestation was located whilst completing boneseed control at Riversdale beach. The area has been controlled under contract.

1.2 Climbing spindleberry

A new site was located in Otaki during surveys for woolly nightshade. Further survey work is required around the site at Hinakura to determine the full extent of spread. This could not be achieved during the winter period due to leaf fall.

1.3 Eelgrass

A new site has been located in Otaki but is confined to a small backyard pond. The plant was removed on inspection.

1.4 Madeira vine

A new site was located in Ngawi. We were advised of this infestation by a ratepayer. Contracts have been let for this species

1.5 Moth plant

A new site was located at Whangaimoana.

1.6 Perennial nettle

Following an *Elements* article a sizeable infestation was reported by a property owner in Carterton, adjacent to Fensham Reserve. Control has occurred in co-operation with the landowner.

1.7 Saffron thistle

Inspections on this species have begun earlier than previous years and as a result a considerable number of seedlings were located at two South Wairarapa sites.

1.8 Woolly nightshade

A new infestation was located in Otaki which contained six plants. All were controlled on inspection.

2. Containment species

2.1 Boneseed

A considerable amount of work has been completed on this species, including-

- Contracts at Riversdale Beach
- Aerial spraying and abseil contracts at Ngawi, South Wairarapa
- A contract covering 200 properties in Kapiti. At these known sites, only 54% contained plants most of which were seedlings.

3. KNE Contracts

Contracts have been let for the control of various species in Waimeha Lagoon, Tauherenikau Bush, Keith George Memorial Park, Porirua Scenic Reserve, Porirua Park, Raroa Reserve and Raumati Escarpment.

4. National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA) inspections

Inspections of retail outlets are being carried out with compliance to date being very good.

Staff have begun weekend inspections of markets in the Western zone. Sites in Porirua and Lower Hutt have been completed to date.

4.1 Water hyacinth

Water hyacinth is an aquatic pest plant of national significance. It has been declared as an Unwanted Organism by Biosecurity NZ.

During the weekend of NPPA inspections, staff located 30 plants growing in water tanks used for breeding goldfish on a property at Lower Hutt. The owner was questioned and advised that some of the plants were there when he purchased the property and none had been sold or distributed. The plants were removed and destroyed. Biosecurity NZ have been notified.

5. Communications

The following were major communication highlights for the September – October period:

- Launch of a new Weedbusters book for children at Otari school. This event was organised by GW staff and included the Minister of Conservation giving a presentation to the school children. One GW staff member played as key role as the 'Woody Weed' character.
- Removed pest plants at Tauherenikau Bush with St Teresa's School, Featherston
- Completed six Powerpoint presentations to various schools and clubs
- Completed articles for *Elements* and *Midweek*
- Staffed displays at Otari Native Plant open day on Saturday 23 September and Kapiti Garden Show on Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 October 2006.

Bovine Tb Update

1. 2006/07 Programme

The AHB have approved a control programme for the 2006/07 year, with an approximate value of \$5.22M. The programme includes the following:

- (a) 280,651 ha possum control
- (b) Trend and performance monitoring.

All surveys have been reviewed and boundaries have been redefined, where necessary, prior to the letting of tenders.

- (c) 25,491 ha possum and ferret surveys, including 10,144ha of possum surveys and 15,347ha of ferret surveys. Some areas will receive both possum and ferret surveys.
- (d) 117,506ha of pig surveys. A further 22,486ha of pig surveys may be added in the Kapiti area.

1.1 The following table summarises the areas already let for the 2006/07 year.

	Possum (ha)	Ferret (ha)	Survey (ha)	Total
GWRC BioWorks	83,208	0	9,776	92,984
Target Pest Control	21,791	0	0	21,791
Professional Guiding	34,977	0	0	34,977
J McCaslin	7,076	0	0	7,076
EPRO Ltd	14,455	0	0	14,455
Remove Control	0	0	0	0
To Determine	119,144	0	15,715	134,859
Totals	280,651	0	25,491	306,142

1.2 The following table details areas of the 2006/07 programme which have been completed. Of the programme already let 33% (55,412ha) has been completed and assessed by performance monitor or audit. Contractors have notified in their monthly reports that they consider they have physically completed 52% (86,600ha) of their current 2006/07 programme.

	Possum (ha)	Ferret (ha)	Survey (ha)	Total
GWRC BioWorks	22,156	0	0	22,156
Target Pest Control	11,770	0	0	11,770
Professional Guiding	7,031	0	0	7,031
J McCaslin	0	0	0	0
EPRO Ltd	14,455	0	0	14,455
Remove Control	0	0	0	0
Totals	55,412	0	0	55,412

1.3 2006/07 Tendering Progress

Currently the fourth parcel of tenders (21,327 ha possum control and 380ha of possum survey) has been issued to contractors for consideration. These tenders close 24 November. Contracts should be awarded late December.

A fifth parcel of vector control and survey tenders will be issued to contractors in December.

Pig control survey areas will be let to a number of private hunters and landowners to provide samples. Some vector control contractors will also be used to facilitate the supply of samples.

1.4 Review of the 2006/07 Programme

A review of the 2006/07 programme has been completed now that all trend and performance monitors from the 2005/06 year have been collated.

A report to the AHB was completed in early October recommending the following changes:

- Remove possum control from approximately 57,820 hectares, due to low RTC's;
- Instigate possum control over 35,494 hectares. This area was scheduled to be skipped during 2006/07.

- Reclassify trend and or performance monitoring as necessary to align with the revised programme.

At the time of writing no response from the AHB has been forthcoming. If approved, there would be approximately \$200,000 in operational savings.

2. Incomplete 2005/06 Operations

The following table details possum control for the 2005/06 year which is incomplete:

Operation / Contractor	strata	strata ha	ha to complete	Comment
BioWorks				
South Wairarapa Stage 3	HR 5	3658	1136	to be completed in December, control currently underway (refer below)

3. South East Wairarapa – Stage 3 (33,180 ha)

BioWorks has 1,136 ha of the SEW Stage 3 programme to be completed. This area was delayed so it could be completed following aerial control in the adjacent Aorangi State Forest Park (Haurangi). Approximately 30,378 hectares of this operation will be treated during the 2006/07 year.

The area has been divided into the following contract strata:

Strata	Contractor	Area (ha)	Comments	Completion Date
HR1	BioWorks	2726	Ground control, Year 2	10/12/06
HR 2 (G)	Target Pests	827	Ground control	10/12/06
HR 3 (G)	Professional Guiding Services	292	Ground control	17/11/06
HR 4 (G1)	Professional Guiding Services	1,757	Ground control	3/11/06
HR 4 (G2)	Professional Guiding Services	379	Ground control	27/10/06
HR 5	BioWorks	3,658	Ground control, Year 2	23/3/07
HR 6	BioWorks	2,268	Ground control, Year 2	27/4/07
HR 7	EPRO Ltd	14,455	Aerial 1080 carrot baits	completed
HR 7 (G)	Target Pests	294	Ground control	3/12/06
HR 7 (A3)	BioWorks	2,154	Aerial 1080 pellet baits	completed
HR 8 (G)	BioWorks	719	Ground control	24/1/07
HR 8 (A)	BioWorks	849	Aerial 1080 pellet baits	completed

**Graeme Campbell
Manager, Flood Protection**

Flood Protection Dept – for period ending 31 October 2006

1. Waiohine Bridge Replacement

The new bridge over the Waiohine River will be opened with a ceremony on Monday 27 November 2006. The ceremony will include a blessing from iwi representatives and short speeches from the Minister of Transport Safety, Hon Harry Duynhoven, and representatives from Transit New Zealand and Greater Wellington Regional Council.

2. Kopuaranga River Enhancement Project

The work to develop a scheme on the Kopuaranga River is close to completion. Members of the project sub-committee are meeting on 8 November to consider a number of potential rating classifications including an option to reduce the length of the scheme. If the scheme is to be reduced in size there would be a number of negatives to the community. One of the rating options has taken account of the willow clearing work carried out earlier this year.

Funding the proposed scheme has been based on a 20 year loan. Funding on loans of significantly less than 20 years will more than likely make the scheme too expensive in the view of the committee. Because the scheme is based on clearing the river of willows rather than building stopbanks the loan term will need some discussion with the councils finance section as there is a reluctance to fund this type of work over any thing more than 3 years. Once the committee are satisfied with the scheme proposal a public meeting will be held, probably within the next three weeks.

3. Restrictions on Waihenga Bridge during Floods

Transit will be closing Waihenga bridge when the gauge reading reaches 4.5 m at Waihenga due to concerns over the bridge safety. Jenkin's Dip starts to operate when the gauge reads 4.4m. This may result in the bypass bridge over Jenkin's Dip only being in operation for a short period before the road is closed.

4. Lower Valley Scheme flood damage repairs

Progress with flood damage work has been moderate due to continuing wet weather conditions. The first phase of Guscott's, the Oporua repairs and about 30% of repairs to stopbank slumping in the Pukio area have been done. Investigation and design work for the Hikunui Sill repairs is progressing.

5. Wairarapa Drainages Schemes

The main Wairarapa Valley has 15 drainage schemes, 5 of which are pumped outfall schemes and 10 are gravity outfall schemes. The extreme rainfall during July/August tested

some schemes to their physical limit. Schemes which experienced some difficulty due to the wet conditions were;

- Battersea Drainage Scheme (Gravity) - Road drains and culverts overflowing involving pumping around some houses by the Fire Brigade.
- Pouawha Drainage Scheme (Pump) - During the height of rainfall event in July a fire developed in the pump-shed switch-board which resulted in a pump stoppage and a \$30,000 repair bill.
- Te Hopai Scheme (Pump) - High lake levels held the flood-gates closed which prevented the pumped floodwater from entering Lake Wairarapa. This caused re-circulation of pumped flood-water which resulted in a power bill for the 2 month period totalling \$21,900, exceeding the budgeted annual power use for this year of \$9,500.

Overall the other schemes coped well with the high rainfall volumes, the most notable fact being that all the pump drainage schemes have experienced higher than usual power costs.

The Te Hopai Drainage Scheme is to have a meeting with its members on the 21 November 2006, to discuss a substantial rate increase to cover the high power usage costs and deferred maintenance expenditure experienced over the last 3 years.

6. Proposed Wairarapa Combined District Plan

Flood Protection staff from both the Wellington and Masterton Offices spent some time reviewing the flood hazard maps and wording in the Proposed Wairarapa Combined District Plan. This work has been used in the Council's submission on the Proposed Plan.

7. Technical Services Activities

The main focus has been on the Waingawa River Scheme Review for Flood Protection, with a start made on resurveying the 30 river cross sections from the Atiwhakatu confluence to the Ruamahanga River. Historic flood record and gravel extraction data has been updated and a start made on registering old aerial photos to document changes in river width and lateral erosion through the period from 1998 to 2006.

Other surveys completed for Flood Protection have been stream profile on the Evan's property at Kopuaranga, check levels at the Hikinui floodway sill, check levels on the Te Whiti stopbank, collection of flood levels around Waihenga Bridge following flood of 24th October, and a site visit to Ed Campbell's property to map 50 year flood extents.

GIS mapping has been completed for Land Management with a number of farm maps and sustainability plans completed, contract maps and warning signs produced for BioWorks and Biosecurity, and ongoing GIS work on Lower Valley and Kopuaranga Reviews.

Staff have been dealing with an increased number of external consultants and public enquiries for floodplain information and maps.

GIS training days have been completed for Parks & Forest, Pest Animal and BioWorks staff in the Upper Hutt and Wairarapa offices.

Dave Cameron

Manager, Land Management

Land Management Dept Report – for period ending 31 October 2006

1. Akura Conservation Centre

Akura Conservation Centre has closed for the year and trading figures to date are indicating that sales have been strong. In particular sales of native plants are up by 26% with total sales reaching 64,000 units.

Planting of new nursery beds was completed in October and good rainfall has ensured a very good strike rate. In excess of 20,000 new pegs were planted, replacing some of the original material planted in 1986. Improved poplar clones make up the bulk of the new planting. Soil moisture content is being monitored weekly to determine appropriate start times for irrigation.

2. Farm Environment Awards

This is the sixth year of the Awards and it is proving very difficult to attract entrants. Entries in the lifestyle category are good, however numbers in the other land use categories are very low. Increased advertising and personal phone calling have not improved the situation. National organisers have been alerted to the problem and a final call on the holding of this year's event will be made in early November.

There are a number of factors that have influenced the small number of entries this year. The extensive slip damage across the Wairarapa hill country is perhaps the major factor. Landowners believe this is a significant detractor from a visual perspective and many potential entrants are wanting to wait a couple of years before making the decision to enter. Other issues include the timing of the event, numbers of landowners in the region, and a general reluctance of landowners to enter awards of this nature.

A review of the awards is warranted. In light of issues identified over the last two or three years it may be prudent to make them a biennial event.

3. Meat and Wool NZ Monitor Farms

A number of new initiatives have been introduced this year into the Monitor Farm programme. Of relevance to sustainable land management is the introduction of Land Environmental Plans (LEP). These Plans are a comprehensive planning approach to land management and include sections on erosion control, riparian management, biodiversity, chemical and fertiliser use, contaminated sites, animal and plant pests, soil health and water quality.

The property selected for this exercise is Matariki, farmed by George and Sarah Tatham at Homewood. Land Management staff are involved in the resource mapping components of the farm plan as well as identification of issues involving biodiversity. Other staff from Greater Wellington will be consulted on other relevant aspects of the plan.

At this stage the LEP will be complementary to Greater Wellington's own plans that focus on erosion control. Promotion and subsequent interest in this more comprehensive type of farm plan will be used to consider future approaches taken by Greater Wellington in respect to integrated farm plans.

Scott Forbes
Manager, BioWorks

BioWorks Unit Report – for period ending 31 October 2006

1. 2005/06 Bovine Tb vector control operations

From the remaining 21 strata, which were either awaiting monitoring or were carried forward from the previous financial year, 18 have now been monitored and passed; two have been completed and are awaiting monitoring; one operation, delayed by landowner request, has now commenced and is due for completion in December.

2. 2006/07 Bovine Tb vector control operations

As at the end of October the BioWorks Unit has won 28 individual strata, totalling 6,993ha of control work.

Six strata or 25,159ha of these operations have been completed and passed monitoring. Four strata or 21,280ha have been completed and are awaiting monitoring.

During the first quarter, the majority of the Bioworks team were working on the Hutt Valley/Moores Valley operation. A large portion of the more difficult country has been completed but the operation is progressing behind schedule due to access problems. Labour costs are currently tracking ahead of budget, however this trend is expected to improve over the balance of the job, although indications are that the swing will not fully account for additional staff days.

The unit is at capacity with committed works through to the beginning of April 2007. Tenders are being prepared for the current tender parcel. The final tender parcel for the Wellington region is expected prior to Christmas.

3. Total GW Bovine Tb vector control 2005/06 & 2006/07 progress and results

Total strata/operations	49	149,725 ha
Operations still in progress (46.5%)	24	69,534 ha
Operations passed first monitor (72%)	18	52,751 ha
Operations passed second monitor (20%)	05	15,850 ha
Operations passed with three or more monitors (8%)	02	11,590 ha

4. Pest Animals KNE

Work has been progressing well. Performance issues are being addressed as part of the BioWorks restructure. John Hopkirk, the Contract Coordinator for Pest Animals work has

focused initially on Wellington operations and getting phasing back on track. This has been very successful and focus now will be to do the same for Wairarapa operations.

5. Land Management planting

BioWorks is now the major contractor for Land Management's riparian planting programme and is set to become a major player in shelter belt planting. We have continued to improve our efforts with pole planting, and have become a key part of the delivery side of this programme. Preliminary discussions are underway with the Land Management team to provide services for site delivery of poles throughout Wairarapa and pole cutting at Akura.

Completed riparian and shelter belt planting projects this winter total 8,000 spot sprays and trees planted, and 6,380 poles planted. BioWorks also undertook a number of operations for Land Management carried out on a labour unit rate.

6. BioWorks Management Group

The BioWorks management team is reviewing how internal services to Council departments can be enhanced, particularly aerial operations for Parks & Forests and Pest Animals.

7. Financial performance

At the end of October the operating deficit was \$175,000. This was \$328,000 better than budget due to the timing of operations. At the same period last year, the operating deficit was \$187,000. To achieve the full-year budget, a further \$700,000 of control work must be secured and completed by 30th June 2007.