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Report to the Rural Services & Wairarapa Committee
from Wayne O'Donnell, Manager, Biosecurity

Regional Pest Management Strategies - Annual Reports 2000/2001

1. Purpose

To report on the performance of the 2000/2001 Operational Plans for implementation of the Regional Pest Plant and Animal Management Strategies.

2. Background

On 2 July 1996, Council adopted the Regional Pest Plant and Animal Management Strategies (RPMS) for implementation during the period 1996 - 2001. The strategies contain objectives specific to individual pests and outline the means by which Council will achieve those objectives.

Section 85 of the Biosecurity Act requires a management agency to prepare an operational plan for each RPMS which it has approved. Furthermore, the agency must prepare a report on the plan and its implementation no later than five months after the end of the each financial year. The report is to be made available to the public and a copy forwarded to the Minister of Biosecurity.

3. Comment

Appendix 1 contains the Annual Reports for the 2000/2001 Operational Plans. The reports outline performance against targets outlined in the Plans. The Committee will note that the reporting requirements are significantly greater than that required for the Council's Annual Report. The Act does include an option to use the Annual Report as the reporting mechanism. However, it is considered more transparent to utilise a separate reporting process, at least during the first five-year term of the RPMS. Council may decide that a more condensed reporting method is appropriate in the future.

Recording and reporting systems have been continually reviewed and, where appropriate modified, over the past five years to ensure that the data collected and analysed is accurate and relevant. These systems were critical for the provision of information for the RPMS review process recently concluded.

4. Performance against Objectives 1996-2001

- (1) One of the major objectives of the RPMS was to increase public understanding of pest management issues. The 2000/2001 year continued the focus on raising the public's awareness, particularly landowner responsibilities, control methodologies, and environmental (including production) effects. Urban residents, in particular, are becoming more knowledgeable about the negative environmental impacts of pests. There continues to be a reducing negative reaction from ratepayers as the RPMS were implemented.
- (2) Conversely, knowledge of and support for managing pests that impact on our indigenous ecosystems has expanded significantly. The Key Native Ecosystem (KNE) programmes have received considerable media attention in recent years as the positive affects of pest control become more noticeable. Council's work in the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary has been a major catalyst for enhancing public awareness of our wider programmes. Possum and mustelid control in KNE has been very successful with low residuals being regularly maintained. The number of community driven environmental organisations involved in assisting with our programmes has steadily increased. The efforts of some of these groups have been recognised through environmental stewardship awards.
- (3) Possum control is now intensively undertaken over a significant percentage of the Region. This has arisen through a combination of expanding Bovine Tb programmes, DoC operations, KNE works and operations on Council lands. Over 80% of the region will receive possum control by 2010 under the Bovine Tb Pest Management Strategy alone.
- (4) Complaints regarding the negative impacts of rabbits have continued to decline since the introduction of Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease(RHD) in September 1997. The 2000/01 surveys indicate the lowest rabbit densities since commencement of the Strategy. The current immunity levels indicate that RHD will continue to reduce rabbit numbers for some time if allowed to spread naturally. However, there will always be pockets of high densities where conventional control methods should be deployed.
- (5) In the period 1986-96, rook number increased tenfold in the Region. However, concerted efforts over the past five years have enabled the objective of reducing the population below 1,000 to be achieved. The introduction of helicopter nest baiting has greatly enhanced our abilities to achieve eventual eradication. Staff have actively assisted personnel from Manawatu and Hawkes Bay Regional Councils to

master aerial baiting techniques as a means of minimising re-invasion from the north.

- (6) The Wellington City pest plant control programme five-year objective was achieved. Progressing initial property inspections has been aided by changes to the maintenance inspection programme. Unfortunately, there remains a high level of new infestations of Old Mans Beard in properties randomly selected for re-inspection. Enforcement via legal notices continues to be an important tool to achieve compliance in these situations. However, the number of legal notices required region-wide decreased steadily over the 1996-2001 period.
- (7) For Total Control plants, annual work programmes were implemented which has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of sites and levels of infestation. The majority of enforcement actions were required for the environmental plants Old Mans Beard and Wild Ginger. This reflects the more intense focus on these species in the urban areas. The Hornwort control trial at Lake Wairarapa was very successful. Registration of the chemical Endothall is now required.
- (8) Compliance with rules associated with Boundary Control plants has generally been very good. Changes in landuse practice have caused some concerns in rural areas. Positive results are occurring in biological control of Ragwort.
- (9) The importance of maintaining focus on the prevention of sale and distribution of National Surveillance plants has been recognised by MAF with the recent development of a National Accord. The Accord gives Council staff the power to inspect plant retail outlets and confiscate any plants that have unwanted organism status.
- (10) Demand for publications, advice and information continues to grow as landowners seek to understand more about the effects of pests and determine what options they may have to implement self help control programmes. Pamphlets and self-help booklets have been regularly developed or updated. An extensive range covering all pest species listed in the RPMS is available for dissemination.

5. Highlights for 2000/01

Highlights for 2000/2001 include:

- Completed the initial survey for pest plants in the Wellington City suburb of Karori under the Wellington City Programme;
- Successfully controlled Old Mans Beard via a number of contracts on major Wairarapa rivers;
- Completion of pest plant control work in Eastbourne, Otari and Kerehana Bay KNE;
- Achieved a high level of public interest in pest management with displays arranged at several public events, including the Wellington Home and

Garden Show, Otaki Smallfarmers Field Day, and the Masterton and Carterton A & P Shows;

- Completed the development of the Proposed Regional Pest Management Strategy 2001-2021;
- Reduced the rook population in the region by 11%, primarily using aerial nest baiting techniques;
- Completed a comprehensive rabbit proneness survey throughout the region, demonstrating that densities are very low;
- Completed a survey to determine rabbit immunity levels to RHD;
- Completed initial and maintenance possum control operations in 40 KNE management areas.

Further details on the highlights are contained within the Reports.

6. Communications

Public notices will be utilised to inform the public that the Annual Reports are available for inspection.

Copies will be forwarded to the appropriate Ministers for their review and comment. A copy will also be forwarded to each Local Authority.

Consideration will be given to using Elements to provide a summary of the key issues.

7. Recommendation

- (1) *That the Committee, as the delegated Management Agency, approves the Annual Reports on the implementation of the 2000/2001 Operational Plans for the Regional Pest Management Strategies.*
- (2) *That a copy of the Reports be forwarded to the Minister of Biosecurity.*
- (3) *That the Reports be made available for public inspection.*

Report prepared by:



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Approved for submission by:

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Attachment: RPMS Annual Reports 2000/2001