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Committee Rural Services Wairarapa Committee
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Changes to Proposed Bovine Tb Vector Control Programme - 2004/05 Year

1. Purpose

To update the Committee on proposed changes to the 2004/05 Bovine Tb vector control programme, with emphasis on the financial implications of these changes.

2. Background

The Council's Long term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) includes a Bovine Tb vector control programme and budget for the 2004/05 financial year that was, like other budgets, developed in late 2002. The budget total amounts to approximately \$6.06M.

The Committee will be aware that, historically, there is significant difficulty estimating programmes and budgets well in advance when the programme focus is on a disease over which we have little direct control. There is also the need to co-ordinate the Wellington regional programme with the Animal Health Board's financial planning and their priorities elsewhere in New Zealand.

The Council's Vector Management Group constantly reviews possum monitoring results and cattle / deer Tb status to identify whether changes should be made to the annual programme. A number of changes can be made in the first six months of a financial year based on the results of possum trend and performance monitoring using the residual trap catch (RTC) methodology.

A number of programme reviews have occurred since late 2002, in conjunction with both the Regional Disease Manager (Agri-Quality NZ) and Animal Health Board (AHB) representatives. These reviews have culminated in a proposal to significantly change the original programme scheduled for 2004/05.

3. Proposed Changes

The original 2003/04 budget was based on the following works programme -

Possum Control	Ferret Control	Surveys
331,770ha	27,500ha	6400ha

The monitoring budget was estimated at \$616,300.

Included in the original budget was one new operation - SE Wairarapa Stage 2, totalling 30,000ha.

Stage 2 was subsequently split with approximately one third being undertaken in 2003/04 and the remainder scheduled for 2004/05, renamed as Stage 3.

A thorough review of future programmes commenced in September 2003. This review focused on the Animal Health Board targets for 2013 under their National Pest Management Strategy and working back from that date to identify the annual 'I' herd targets we would have to achieve. This review highlighted that the targets were unlikely to be met unless new works were introduced more rapidly than originally planned. The review recommended the following vector control programme be planned for 2004/05:

Possum Control	Ferret Control	Surveys
394,000ha	40,000ha	116,453ha

The monitoring budget increased to \$780,600.

The revised proposal includes significant increases in possum control and surveys. New possum control operations proposed include –

- ◆ Masterton Flats
- ◆ Carterton Flats
- ◆ Greytown Flats
- ◆ SE Wairarapa Stage 3
- ◆ Moore's Valley

The AHB have recently given approval to bring the Masterton Flats operation forward in to 2003/04, using funds saved from operations that have been removed from the current programme due to low RTC values.

The original 2004/05 survey programme included a single survey in the Mt Bruce- Waipoua area. The revised programme proposes to include 19 surveys in existing operational areas and a further three in new areas, termed –

- ◆ Cities - 29,000ha (urban areas – western zone)
- ◆ Ohariu Valley - 7,900ha
- ◆ Wellington Rural - 8,700ha

4. Reasons for Change

The National Pest Management Strategy (NPMS) for Bovine Tb has a number of interim objectives leading up to 2013 when the AHB's target of achieving international standards for Tb is envisaged. The interim objectives include –

- ◆ Reducing Tb incidence in Vector Risk Areas (VRA);
- ◆ Changing existing VRA to Vector Free Areas (VFA);
- ◆ Maintaining the status of existing VFA.

The whole of the Wellington region is currently classed as a VRA. In order to progress towards a VFA, we need firstly, to further reduce the number of infected herds and secondly, identify what level of Tb infection remains in the vectors.

Reducing Tb infected herds long term can only be achieved by increasing the area under intensive vector control. The region still has large areas where possum densities are high and Tb infected herds remain.

An increase in vector surveys is planned for two reasons –

- ◆ To identify whether Tb infection still exists in areas that the Disease Manager wishes to transfer from VRA to VFA. This change would have significant financial benefits with regards to reduced vector control and reduced herd testing requirements in the future;
- ◆ To establish the level of Tb in vectors in areas not currently included in the vector control programme. This data will determine when and where, if necessary, vector control should be expanded. There are, therefore, potential cost implications of some significance for the various NPMS funding partners.

5. Funding Implications

The proposed expanded vector control programme and the large increase in surveys has resulted in the costs of the now proposed 2004/05 programme increasing significantly to \$8.06M. Included in this total is an increase in Vector Management costs, predominantly due to fulfilling additional communication requirements under the new Local Environment Management Plan.

Based on the regional share percentage for the 2003/04 year (12.1%), the Council would need to fund an additional \$242,000 for the expanded programme in 2004/05. The current funding policy for the Bovine Tb Regional Share requires a general rate contribution of 60%, with the remaining 40% from the targeted Bovine Tb rate. The increased funding apportionment would therefore be \$145,200 general rate, and \$96,800 Bovine Tb rate.

The desired vector control programme may remain at the \$8.0 - 8.1M level for a few years before declining. These totals are likely to be a worst case situation. Historically, annual programmes have always been reduced following analysis of RTC trend monitoring and herd Tb status results.

The repercussions of not funding an expanded programme have been identified above in Section 4, i.e. a delay in reducing the number of infected herds in the region, and prolonging the transfer of parts of the region from VRA to VFA.

If the Council opted to maintain the status quo then two potential problems arise –

- The region is unlikely to achieve the 2013 Bovine Tb targets under the NPMS and
- The Council would have to continue funding the programme at the current level for a longer period of time.

6. Communications

It is not considered appropriate to specifically communicate this matter until the Council has considered the proposal within the Council's budget consideration process.

7. Recommendation

That the Committee notes the information contained within the report.

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