



Biosecurity

Introduction

Northland Regional Council is responsible — under the Biosecurity Act 1993 — for locating and controlling pest plants and animals in Northland.

Pests of particular concern in the region are identified in the Northland Regional Pest Management Strategies. These are a collection of action plans that describe why and how plant and animal pests will be controlled.

The Council's goal is to stop potential pests from entering the region, in addition to managing existing pest infestations to levels where they no longer pose a threat to our natural environment, economy and health.

In addition to managing and operating pest management strategies, it is the role of the Council to work in partnership with local communities and industry to promote pest management and facilitate pest control.



There are hundreds of mustelid traps like this in Northland.

They are predominantly used to catch stoats and are a favourite of Landcare groups and private landowners, as well as the Regional Council.

Mustelid traps are available from the Regional Council.

Phone 0800 002 004.

Regional Pest Management Strategies

Pest species in Northland are listed in the Regional Pest Management Strategies (RPMS), which are published by the Council. There are currently 25 different strategies in operation. These strategies provide guidance on how pest plants and animals should be managed in the region.

During the 2008-09 financial year, the Council began the process of reviewing the RPMS and decided to merge the existing 25 documents into 3 – marine pests, animal pests and pest plants.

The review highlighted the growing impact that plant and animal pests (particularly weeds) are having on our region and a number of additional plant and animal species were added.

The proposed RPMS place greater emphasis on investigating new options for controlling pest plants, such as biological control, and also increasing the scale of pest control areas to link existing community projects (such as Community Pest Control Areas), to protect biodiversity on private land in Northland.

The proposed plant RPMS recognises Kauri dieback disease as a potentially serious pathogen for Northland and proposes that the Council continue to work with the joint agency response team to reduce the spread of the disease.

Tactics to address the impact of pest insects, like the fruit drilling guava moth and tropical grass webworm, are also addressed in the revised document.

Biosecurity performance targets

Work to reduce the adverse impacts of exotic organisms, pest plants and animal pests on primary production, natural ecosystems and on human health:

Promote pest management options, work in partnership with Biosecurity New Zealand to identify, eradicate, contain and manage pest species and provide an organism identification service to the public.

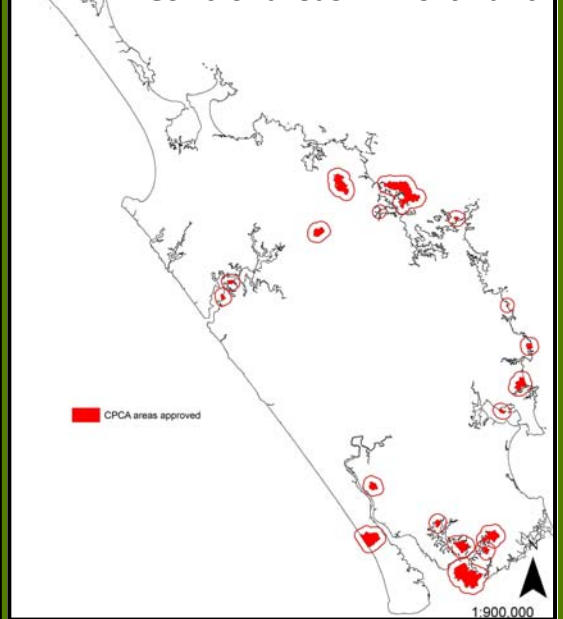
Undertake animal pest management operations and report annually to the Landcare Committee on the achievement of set targets.

Implement pest plant service delivery programmes and report annually on the implementation of pest management strategies to the Landcare Committee.

Enforce rules in the Northland Regional Pest Management Strategies and report to each Council meeting on the number of sites inspected and the outcome of these inspections.

Provide advice on the control of problem plants, animals and insects and report to each Council meeting on the number and type of enquiries received.

Existing Community Pest Control areas in Northland





The risks that wild deer and feral pigs pose to the region have been recognised in the animal RPMS. In addition, species such as red eared slider and long necked turtles (currently sold by some pet shops) have been included in a 'risk assessment' category. The potential impact of these animals on native freshwater species if released into the wild is predicted to be high.

In May 2009, a discussion document on the proposed marine RPMS was released and feedback was received from 40 different people/organisations. Consultation on all three documents will continue in 2009-10.

Pest control

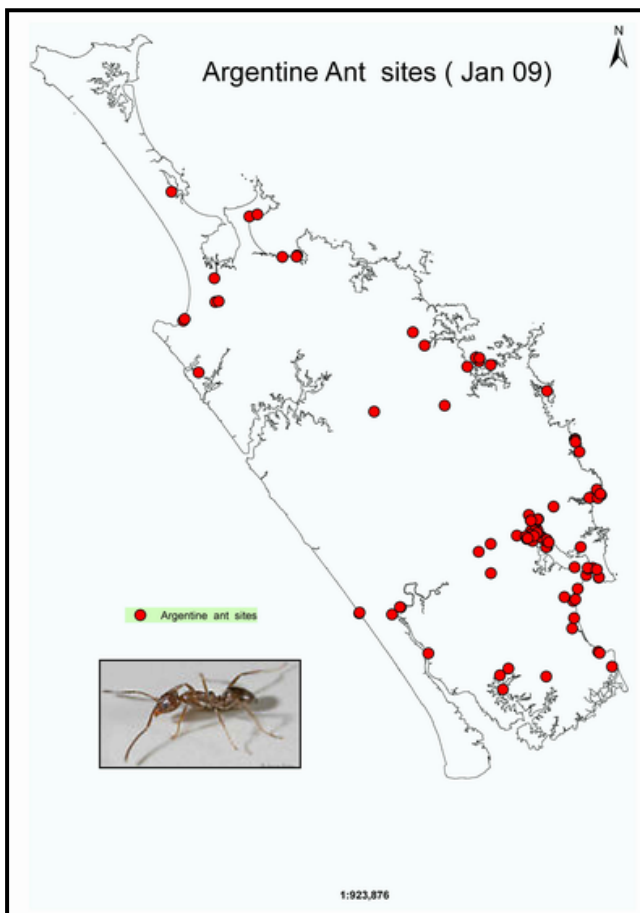
During 2008-09, the Council biosecurity team responded to 984 enquiries in relation to pest management.

Biosecurity staff carried out monitoring and/or control of of:

- ◆ **Pest plants** - including Nassella tussock, Spartina, Bathurst bur, Californian thistle, nodding thistle and Lantana.
- ◆ **Invertebrate pests** - including guava moth, tropical grass webworm, gum leaf skeletoniser and pest ants, such as Argentinean ants.
- ◆ **Pest animals** - including possums, mustelids, cats, rats and goats; and
- ◆ **Maritime invaders** – such as sea squirt

Biocontrol

Few realise it but Northland is a battleground for a largely unseen war between a host of tiny insects and fungi and some of the region's worst weeds. In the last five years alone, 49 releases of different 'biocontrol' agents have occurred in Northland to help control weeds such as Californian, nodding and Scotch thistles, alligator weed, broom, gorse, mistflower and ragwort.

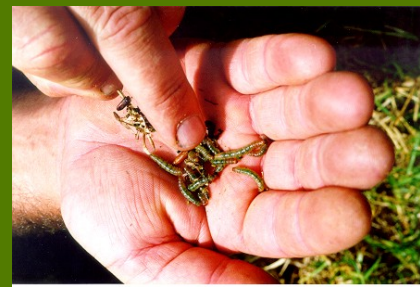


Before bio agents can be released into New Zealand, there is a rigorous process of trial and experimentation overseen by the Environmental Risk Management Agency (ERMA). Imports are strictly controlled and scientists can take several years to satisfy the risk assessment criteria and complete trial work. This is to ensure that the bio agents don't pose a risk to New Zealand's native plants or animals.

The only new biocontrol agent introduced in Northland in 2008-09 was the buddleja leaf weevil, which was released in a trial to control buddleja near Kaikohe. This trial will be monitored closely and if successful, may be rolled out to other locations in the region.



Styela clava (sea squirt) is a recent maritime invader.



Tropical grass webworm.

Pest invertebrates

The following new invertebrates were identified in Northland in 2008-09:

- ◆ Pest species tomato/potato psyllid (*Bactericera cockerelli*) – a serious pest of many crops, including tomato, potato and tamarillo.
- ◆ Beneficial insects – clover root weevil parasitic wasp (*Microctonus aethiopooides*), *Cleopus japonicus*, weevil that controls buddleja, boneseed leafroller (*Tortrix s.l.sp chrysanthemoides*) a biocontrol agent that controls boneseed and *Cleobora mellyi* ladybird predator of the Eucalyptus tortoise beetle.

In addition, several surveys of existing Argentine ant control areas were undertaken during 2008-09. A survey of Mangaiti Beach CPCA indicated that the overall infestation is controlled with some small pockets yet to be eradicated. A survey of Skudders Beach CPCA indicated the same results.