

# the state of our environment



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Gisborne 2007 and 2008

## Animal and Plant Pests

### Principal findings

- Over 45,000 possums were killed during this reporting period.
- Rabbits did not reach levels requiring control measures during the reporting period
- Two properties were targeted for control of rooks.
- Argentine ants were confirmed in 17 reported cases in 2007 and 43 in 2008.
- Monitoring of Eradication plant sites was assisted by GPS technology.

Gisborne District has a Regional Pest Management Strategy, and Gisborne District Council has a management role, to ensure pest control is carried out according to correct procedures, and is coordinated with neighbouring councils and other agencies.

Possums are the priority pest in Gisborne District, and have Total Control status. They are a threat to Gisborne District's TB-free status, and can cause very serious damage to indigenous vegetation, plantation forests and trees planted for soil conservation.

### How many possums are there?

To determine the severity of the possum issue in the District, Council staff carry out night-count monitoring. This method involves field officers traversing a set route on three consecutive nights between February and March each year. Operators use a motorcycle and a spotlight to count possums (and rabbits) seen at 1km intervals, within 50m on either side of the route. The highest counts are used, expressed in the table, over as number of pests per kilometre.

Rabbits reach densities requiring control from time to time, normally in isolated pockets. Rabbit density is measured against the nationally recognised Gibb Scale. A rabbit night-count in excess of 5 rabbits per kilometre would equate to "level 3" on the Gibb Scale – the trigger level at which control is required to be undertaken by the landowner.

Rabbit control is often done using Pindone baits within Gisborne District, and is usually initiated by landowners who have had nuisance levels of rabbits, still well below level 3 on the Gibb Scale.

### Rooks

Seven properties were monitored during 2007-08 for these destructive Eradication Group pests. One property in the Waerenga-o-Kuri district was targeted for control in 2007. An established rookery containing up to fourteen rooks was aerial-baited with a follow up control shoot in September 2007 achieving a 92% kill rate.

In October 2008 one active rookery comprising around 50 birds was targeted by aerial baiting in the Pehiri area. Post-poisoning monitoring approximately two days after the operation revealed at least twelve surviving birds, resulting in an estimated kill rate of 76%. No rooks were sighted during subsequent monitoring of this site.



Above: Council pest officers, with the tools of the trade.

## Possum and rabbit night-count monitoring results for 2007 – 2008

Count route	Possums/km 2007	Rabbits/km 2007	Possums/km 2008	Rabbits/km 2008
Water works/ Waingake	7.2	0.1	3.3	0.4
Highlands- Tahora	4	0.4	2.7	0.1
Waimaha- Tahunga	6	0.6	4.4	0.5
Huia-Tahunga	4.6	0.1	6	0.4
Te Apiti- Whatatutu	This route not counted in 2007 - 2008			
Mokomoko- Tolaga/ Tokomaru Bay	0.6	0.6	Not counted in 2008	

### Argentine ants

There were twenty Requests for Service pertaining to ants received by Council in 2007. Seventeen of these were confirmed as Argentine ants while the remaining three were white-footed or common black ants.

In 2008 Council received 66 Requests for Service regarding ants: forty-three of these were confirmed as Argentine ants and twenty-three were other species.

Residents with confirmed Argentine ant infestations can obtain 'Xtinguish' paste at cost price through the Council. There have been requests for Council to include Argentine ants in the next (2009-2014) Regional Pest Management Strategy for the Gisborne District.

### Control of animal pests

In rural areas, possum control utilises a combination of night shooting, poisoning and trapping. Other animal pests are also shot when the opportunity arises during possum control operations.

### Pest kills for 2007 and 2008

	Possums	Rabbits	Goats	Feral cats	Ferrets	Hares/ others	Totals
2007	28,821	3,681	2,547	150	10	1,299	36,508
2008	16,498	1,919	543	64	4	1,059	20,087



Above: Capture of nuisance magpies using cage traps on loan from the Council

The Pests and Plants Section of Council is able to offer advice to residents wishing to control pests on their properties, and can loan cage traps for pests creating a nuisance, as often happens in residential areas.

Council staff can also advise with poisoning rabbits, if this can be done safely by placing baits out of reach of children and pests.

### Eradication Group plant pests

These are plant pests of restricted abundance or range, but with a high potential to spread and cause serious effects if not contained and controlled.

There are fifteen plants in the Eradication Group, and the long-term objective is complete eradication.

Council Plant Pest Officers use hand-held GPS units to register existing and new Eradication Plant sites. It is envisaged that this data will in future transfer to a suitable mapping format that will assist in future monitoring, establishing seasonal distribution trends, as well as reviewing the effectiveness of plant pest management.

Nodding thistle sites are monitored by Council staff on an intensive 8-week rotation, since this plant can produce viable seed during summer as well as in autumn. Others like climbing spindle-berry and spiny emex seed once a year, and are monitored less frequently.

There are statutory requirements for land occupiers to initiate appropriate measures or practices to control any eradication plant pests to the satisfaction of an authorised person.

Landowners who fail to comply with instructions from an authorised Council Officer can be served with a Notice of Direction outlining control measures that must be carried out to a required standard within a prescribed time frame. There were two Notice of Directions issued during 2007-2008, and fortunately compliance was achieved in both cases.

There were eleven voluntary woolly nightshade property programmes issued to land occupiers advising them that control work is required and to be carried out within an agreed time.

Interestingly, around 80% of Burdock infestations are found in the Waiapu and Matakaoa Wards. Approximately 70% of nodding thistle infestations are within the Waikohu Ward, 23% in Cook Ward and the remaining 7% are within Patutahi, Uawa and Waiapu Wards.

Council pest plant staff responded to five requests concerning eradication plants within urban areas. Four woolly nightshade infestations and one of boneseed were identified and landowners advised on appropriate control for the plants.

### Containment plants

Gisborne District's twenty-one species of Containment plants are abundant in suitable habitats across the district and are therefore unlikely to be eradicated. The aim for this group is containment so they do not spread further, especially onto neighbouring land that is free from them.

Responsibility lies with landowners and occupiers, who must control infestations on their land, in particular along property boundaries. Council responds to all reports or complaints and will implement statutory regulations when necessary to ensure the boundary clearance rule is adhered to.

There were fifteen complaints/requests for advice during 07/08, and six voluntary property programmes issued for boundary clearance of blackberry, variegated thistle and gorse during the period. One Notice of Direction was issued for failing to control variegated thistle near a boundary, and as a result compliance was achieved.

This group includes blue morning glory, Japanese honeysuckle, moth plant, Madeira vine, periwinkle, smilax, tree privet and Chinese privet.

These are unlikely to ever be eradicated because they are abundant in suitable habitats (especially urban), and only cause adverse effects in specific areas. Council staff will respond to all enquires received and provide advice on who is responsible for control and appropriate control options.

Council Officers responded to forty enquires regarding Limited Control plants during the reporting period.

### Regional Surveillance plants

These plants are not yet known in Gisborne District, but have potential to cause adverse effects if allowed to establish.

Council staff identified seven isolated infestations of Californian stinkweed, mainly along road verges. The infestations are of very low density, so are being regularly monitored and controlled to ensure they remain contained within their present locations. This plant probably arrived on vehicles from outside the region.

### National Pest Plant Accord list

The list contains plants considered pests throughout New Zealand. They are banned from propagation, sale and distribution. A coloured information manual was updated in 2008 and is available to the public by contacting the Council or MAF Biosecurity New Zealand. A full copy of the NPPA manual can be viewed at [www.biosecurity.govt.nz/nppa](http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/nppa)

As part of ensuring none of the NPPA list plants are not being sold locally, Council has three Officers authorised by MAF Biosecurity NZ



Above: Variegated thistle, Eradication Group plant in all wards except Matakaoa.



Above: Old man's beard (Containment plant status) in roadside vegetation. Control method is to cut and poison the stem.

to carry out inspections of all garden plant retail shops or premises where plants are being sold.

Council staff inspected sixteen garden retail outlets in 2007 and seventeen in 2008. In 2007 no banned plants were found, but in 2008 five retailers had a banned plant on their premises; these were removed and destroyed.

Six residential properties were visited that had Water hyacinth and Hornwort in ornamental ponds. Council and MAF staff removed these banned aquatic plants.

### "Plant Me Instead" booklets

A coloured booklet has been published by Weedbusters with support from the Gisborne District Council, Department of Conservation and Hawke's Bay Regional Council. It contains photos of ornamental plants that have escaped from gardens to become weeds, and provides suggestions of suitable alternative non-invasive plants to grow.

The booklet is freely available from Council's Pest and Plants Division.

Inspection and monitoring for Eradication-Group plants 2007-2008

Eradication plant	Distribution/ Wards <sup>5</sup>	Properties Visited		Number of site visits		Active sites		Non-active sites	
		2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008	2007	2008
African feather grass	C,U	2	3	2	4	1	4	1	0
Australian sedge <sup>1</sup>	P	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	0
Banana passionfruit	G, C, P, Wk, U, Wp	50	30	50	77	37	65	10	12
Boneseed	G, C, P, Wk, M	42	18	42	31	38	18	4	13
Boxthorn <sup>2</sup>	C, Wk, Wp, M	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Burdock	C, U, Wp	134	59	238	62	162	47	76	15
Climbing spindle-berry	C, P, Wk, U, Wp	10	10	26	13	22	10	4	3
Gorse <sup>3</sup>	Wk	14	7	14	66	13	28	1	38
Nodding thistle	G, U, Wp	124	110	2,042	2,566	868	807	1174	1759
Red cestrum	P	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Spiny emex	C, P, Wk, Wp, M	21	4	21	22	16	5	5	17
Undaria	G, C, P, Wk, U, Wp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Variegated thistle <sup>4</sup>	G, C, P, Wk, M	59	14	59	15	52	9	7	6
White edged nightshade	C, Wk, Wp, M	7	7	7	0	4	0	3	0
Woolly nightshade	C, U, Wp	144	103	144	124	122	105	22	17
<b>Totals</b>		<b>611</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>2,650</b>	<b>2,938</b>	<b>1,338</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>1,309</b>	<b>1,880</b>

1. Applies to all Wards except Waiapu and Matakaoa; 2 and 3 Waikohu Ward only; 4. Matakaoa Ward only  
5. G = Gisborne/urban; C =Cook; P = Patutahi; Wk = Waikohu; U = Uawa; Wp = Waiapu; M = Matakaoa.

Inspection and monitoring for Containment-Group plants 2007-2008

	Properties inspected	Number of properties at each infestation level					Properties inspected	Number of properties at each infestation level				
	2007	0	1	2	3	4	2008	0	1	2	3	4
Australian sedge <sup>6</sup>	2			2			2					
Barberry	1					1	3				2	1
Bathurst bur	3			1		2	5		1		1	3
Blackberry	38	1	3	1	3	30	19	1	2	2	6	8
Boxthorn <sup>7</sup>	4		2	2								
Buddleia	0											
Common pampas	2					2	1				1	
Gorse <sup>8</sup>	63	1	6	14	3	39	45	7	13	9	4	12
Hawthorn	0						2					
Holly leaved senecio	5				2	3	10	1		3	3	3
Montpellier broom	3			2		1						
Old man's beard	98	13	20	23	13	29	74	13	19	23	11	8
Purple pampas	0											
Ragwort	3	1			1	1	4					4
Spartina	0											
Star thistle	34	9	11	7	3	4	30	7	4	4	5	6
Sweet briar	0											
Thorn apple	0						3			1	2	
Variegated thistle <sup>9</sup>	42	8	11	2	2	19	31	3	3	4	6	15
Wild broom	3					3	10		2	2	3	3
Wild ginger	2		1			1	10	3	2	5		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>63</b>

6. Waiapu and Matakaoa Wards only; 7 and 8. All Wards except Waikohu; 9. All wards except Matakaoa