

**Report 99.262**

24 May 1999

File: Y/15/3/2

Report to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee  
from Kevin Worsley, Senior Biosecurity Officer (Plants)

## **Old Man's Beard Control - Wellington City**

### **1. Purpose**

To request the Committee's endorsement, as the regional management agency for the Pest Plant Management Strategy, to proposed changes to the management programme for Old Man's Beard in Wellington City.

### **2. Background**

Prior to the Council taking responsibility for the enforcement of the Noxious Plants Act in 1989, Old Mans Beard (OMB) was not classified as a noxious plant in Wellington City. At that time the degree of infestation was such that the former Noxious Plants Council considered the species was unable to be controlled within the City due to the extreme level of infestations.

In 1991 to gain uniformity, OMB was classified as a noxious plant throughout the remainder of the region. Increasing public awareness and pressure resulted in this Council applying for re-classification for Wellington City. This was subsequently approved in 1992.

The Council then developed a City wide inspection programme in 1993, with the intention of eventually eradicating OMB. Individual property inspections commenced in the northern suburbs. At the time it was considered that initial inspections could be completed in 5-7 years.

### **3. Current Situation**

Unfortunately, only one third of the City has had control work completed to date.

Progress is well behind schedule with completion now estimated to be in excess of 10 years using existing resources and procedures.

The slow progress has not been due to staff performance but rather the procedures used. These currently involve an initial inspection of each property

with total clearance required of all infestations located. An annual maintenance inspection is made of all active sites and these continue until a site is clear of plants for twelve months. With thousands of individual properties being inspected, there has been a need, on numerous occasions, to instigate legal proceedings to ensure compliance. This has also caused progress delays.

The 3.5 staff involved in the Wellington programme are now devoted almost entirely to maintenance inspections. The decline in forward momentum results from the increasing numbers of properties under the control programme. The addition of other species under the Regional Pest Plant Management Strategy has exacerbated the problem. Historically, staff were only inspecting for OMB but are now required to locate infestations of Wild Ginger and Cathedral Bells. Both of the latter species are far more prevalent in the City than first thought.

#### **4. Proposal**

To improve progress, it is proposed to reduce the number of maintenance inspections of each site. It is intended to undertake only one maintenance inspection, approximately twelve months after the initial clearance was completed. The exception would be where an occupier is under an extended clearance programme. (An extension is often agreed where a major infestation is to be cleared). Random inspections of some sites would be carried out and immediate Notices of Direction issued where re-infestations are noted. Occupiers with recently active sites will be forwarded a reminder, from time to time, requesting they regularly check and clear their property.

Currently there are 1519 active sites of Old Mans Beard in the survey area. For the financial year to the 1<sup>st</sup> May these have involved the bulk of the 2352 individual property inspections completed. If the new scheme were introduced from the 1<sup>st</sup> July, no maintenance inspections would be required for the next twelve months, with the exception of the few properties under an extended control programme.

It is acknowledged that reducing maintenance inspections increases the risk of re-infestation. Increased public education and random inspections will help to prevent this. However, a lower level of overall control can be expected. Without limiting this component of the programme, however, little forward momentum could be expected. Delays in progressing into new areas increases the extent of infestation to be confronted. This is a growing source of complaint from occupiers.

#### **5. Implications for RPMS**

Council recently approved a series of minor amendments to the regional pest management strategies. During the review process, changes were made to the inspection programme to reflect the current rate of progress. Apart from taking longer to achieve, all other aspects of the programme will remain the same. Control responsibilities will continue to be with the landowner / occupier.

A comprehensive analysis of the Wellington City OMB programme will occur when the strategy review process commences next financial year.

## **6. Recommendation**

- (1) *That the report be received.*
- (2) *That the Committee endorses the proposal to amend the current Old Man's Beard inspection programme for Wellington City.*

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission by:

Kevin Worsley  
Senior Biosecurity Officer (Plants)

Wayne O'Donnell  
Manager, Biosecurity