

5.8 Chilean needle grass (*Nassella neesiana*)

Why is it a threat?

Chilean needle grass (CNG) is highly invasive, exhibits high reproductive rates, rapid growth and high climatic and soil tolerance. It quickly forms dense cover over large areas which exclude preferred pasture species. This reduces the productivity of the land for pastoral farmers through direct impact on livestock and the limitations imposed to minimise further spread of the species. Chilean needle grass can also pose a threat to natural tussock and grassland ecosystems. Chilean needle grass flowers between November and April. A Chilean needle grass adult plant is unpalatable to stock during the flowering period.



Chilean needle grass is capable of producing seed by three means:

1. Aerial seeds;
2. Stem seeds; and
3. Basal seeds (cleistogenes).

The aerial seeds have sharp tips, which can bore into the eyes and pelts of animals. The seeds penetrate wool and reduce agricultural capability within the region. Chilean needle grass seed is not readily spread by wind but is easily spread by machinery, livestock, hay, waterways and people.

5.8.1 Objective

Over the duration of the RPMP, control Chilean needle grass (*Nassella neesiana*) in the Marlborough district to less than or equal to baseline levels* to minimise adverse effects on economic wellbeing, the environment and enjoyment of the natural environment.

*A baseline assessment will be made either prior to or immediately after the RPMP commences.

Intermediate Outcome:

Exclusion	Eradication	Progressive Containment	Sustained Control	Site-led
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Principle measures to achieve the objective

1) Council Inspection and Service Delivery

Inspection by Council may include staff or contractors:

- a) Delivering a service to control Chilean needle grass, in liaison with the occupier.
- b) Carrying out inspections to ensure occupiers are meeting obligations.
- c) Visiting properties or doing surveys to determine whether pests are present.
- d) Monitoring effectiveness of control.
- e) Carry out control using administrative powers of the Biosecurity Act 1993, if necessary.

2) Requirement to Act

Land owners and/or occupiers or other persons may be required to act where rules or statutory obligations dictate:

- a) Certain high spread risk activities are regulated.
- b) The presence of pests is to be reported.

3) Advocacy and Education

Council may:

- a) Provide general purpose education, advice, awareness and publicity activities to land owners and/or occupiers and the public about pests and pathways (and control of them).
- b) Encourage land owners and/or occupiers to control pests.
- c) Promote industry requirements and best practice to contractors and land owners and/or occupiers.
- d) Encourage land owners and/or occupiers and other persons to report any pests they find.
- e) Facilitate or commission research.
- f) Continue to engage with the Chilean Needle Grass Action Group (CNGAG) Marlborough.

5.8.2 Rules

Rule 5.8.2.1

Occupiers shall destroy all Chilean needle grass (*Nassella neesiana*) plants, on land that they occupy, each year before they produce seed, unless a management plan* approved by Council is in place.

A breach of this rule will create an offence under section 154N(19) of the Biosecurity Act.

*A management plan for the purposes of Rule 5.8.2.1 is an agreed plan between the occupier and Council that outlines how Chilean needle grass will be managed on the land they occupy and will contain administration provisions relating to the maintenance of the RPMP.

Note 1: A minimum requirement (but may not be the only requirement) for management plans approved by Council for Chilean needle grass will be the annual destruction of plants within 20 metres of property boundaries, except on boundaries with other heavily infested properties.

Note 2: Approved management plans will be dynamic and available to the occupier for reference at any time via the online Property File system.

Rule 5.8.2.2

No person shall move sheep from a property with a known infestation of Chilean needle grass (*Nassella neesiana*), unless:

1. The sheep are being transported directly to slaughter, or
2. The sheep were solely grazed in an unaffected area of the property, as agreed to by Council,

A record that details the steps taken to meet the rule requirement must be kept for a minimum period of 5 years from the date of movement.

A breach of this rule will create an offence under section 154N(19) of the Biosecurity Act.

Rule 5.8.2.3

No person shall move cattle from a property with a known infestation of Chilean needle grass (*Nassella neesiana*), unless:

1. The cattle are being transported directly to slaughter, or
2. The cattle were solely grazed in an unaffected area of the property, as agreed to by Council, or
3. The movement is taking place between 1 April and 30 September, and

4. The movement is taking place when ground conditions are dry, and
5. The cattle are stood down (to empty out), for 12 hours prior to movement.

A record that details the steps taken to meet the rule requirement must be kept for a minimum period of 5 years from the date of movement.

A breach of this rule will create an offence under section 154N(19) of the Biosecurity Act.

Rule 5.8.2.4

No person shall move any domestic animal or farmed livestock (excluding sheep and cattle) off a property containing a known infestation of Chilean needle grass (*Nassella neesiana*) if that domestic animal or farmed livestock is carrying seed or plant parts of Chilean needle grass.

A breach of this rule will create an offence under section 154N(19) of the Biosecurity Act.

Rule 5.8.2.5

No person shall move any machinery off a property containing a known infestation of Chilean needle grass (*Nassella neesiana*), unless:

1. The machinery has been cleaned on the originating property to a standard where there is no visible soil or organic matter; and
2. The machinery has been inspected by a person approved by Council to inspect machinery for the purposes of this rule; or
3. The machinery has been operating within an unaffected area of the property, as agreed to by Council.

A breach of this rule will create an offence under section 154N(19) of the Biosecurity Act.

Note: An exemption to this Rule may be available. See section 5.8.3 below and also Section 7, page 94.

Rule 5.8.2.6

No person shall move any hay or other stock feed/arable crop product off a property containing a known infestation of Chilean needle grass (*Nassella neesiana*), unless the hay or any other stock feed/arable crop has originated from an unaffected area of the property, as agreed to by Council.

A breach of this rule will create an offence under section 154N(19) of the Biosecurity Act.

Rule 5.8.2.7

No person shall spread or cause to spread plant parts of Chilean needle grass (*Nassella neesiana*) including seed or soil likely to contain seed from an infested property.

A breach of this rule will create an offence under section 154N(19) of the Biosecurity Act.

Rule 5.8.2.8

Occupiers are required to notify Council of any new infestation* of Chilean needle grass (*Nassella neesiana*) on land that they occupy within 5 working days of the initial observation.

A breach of this rule will create an offence under section 154N(19) of the Biosecurity Act.

* Current distribution data is able to be viewed online via Council's Smart Maps service.

Explanation of the rules:

The purpose of Rule 5.8.2.1 is in accordance with section 73(5)(h) in that all occupiers within an infestation of Chilean needle grass are being required to take specified actions to prevent the pest establishing on that land.

The purpose of Rules 5.8.2.2 to 5.8.2.7 are in accordance with section 73(5)(e) in that activities that may be at risk of introducing Chilean needle grass into new unaffected areas of Marlborough are regulated as the constant threat of movement via contaminated goods will affect the implementation of the RPMP.

The purpose of Rule 5.8.2.8 is in accordance with section 73(5)(a) to assist Council with surveillance. Requiring occupiers to notify Council of new sites and plants on their properties, in addition to Council's own surveillance, will assist Council in achieving the objective of the programme. New infestations will be able to be controlled and incorporated into the programme.

Notifying the Council of the presence of the specified pest will enable the Council to:

- Update its records.
- Map new sites of this pest.
- Carry out control work before they spread.
- Determine whether new control regimes should be considered.
- Provide advice and information to occupiers where appropriate.

Council as the management agency will administer these rules.

5.8.3 Exemptions

Exemptions to any of these rules may be developed by Council where necessary, or via application, and are assessed on a case by case basis. When applied for, they can be granted, granted with conditions or denied in accordance with section 78 of the Biosecurity Act 1993. The detailed process is in Section 7 on page 94.