



From the Editor

Hi All, and welcome to the inaugural Marlborough Nassella Report, borne from conversations with land occupiers who supported the idea of a regular newsletter.

This season Council has sent 354 letters to land occupiers with significant infestations, reminding them of their annual obligation to destroy all plants before they flower. These occupiers also received a Nassella Tussock Control Programme with an agreed Council inspection date.

Council Biosecurity received and approved 18 requests from land occupiers for an extension to their Control Programme, and issued 127 reminder letters to occupiers upon the due date of their Control Programme.

Well done to those who have successfully completed their Control Programme to time for this season. Your efforts contribute to the goal of keeping Nassella Tussock under sustained control in the Marlborough Region. However, please remember that follow-up work may be required to ensure your property complies with the 'seed-set' rule.

Biosecurity staff encourages all land occupiers to make a concerted effort to complete their control work to a high standard by the completion date set in their Control Programme. This helps to reduce the number of follow-up visits by inspectors, and helps to ensure that other occupiers do not miss out on a free site visit.

If you have any queries please don't hesitate to make contact with one of the team.

In the meantime, successful lambing. See you on the hill.

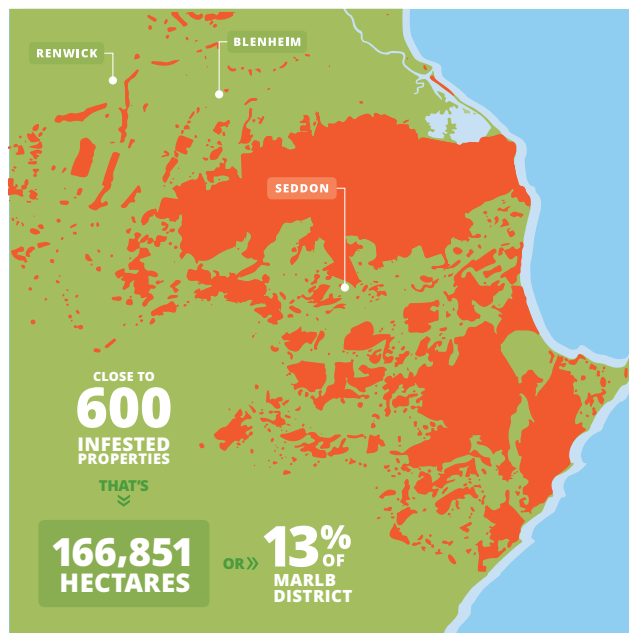
Rob Simons

Senior Biosecurity Officer

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A Snapshot of Nassella Tussock in the Marlborough District

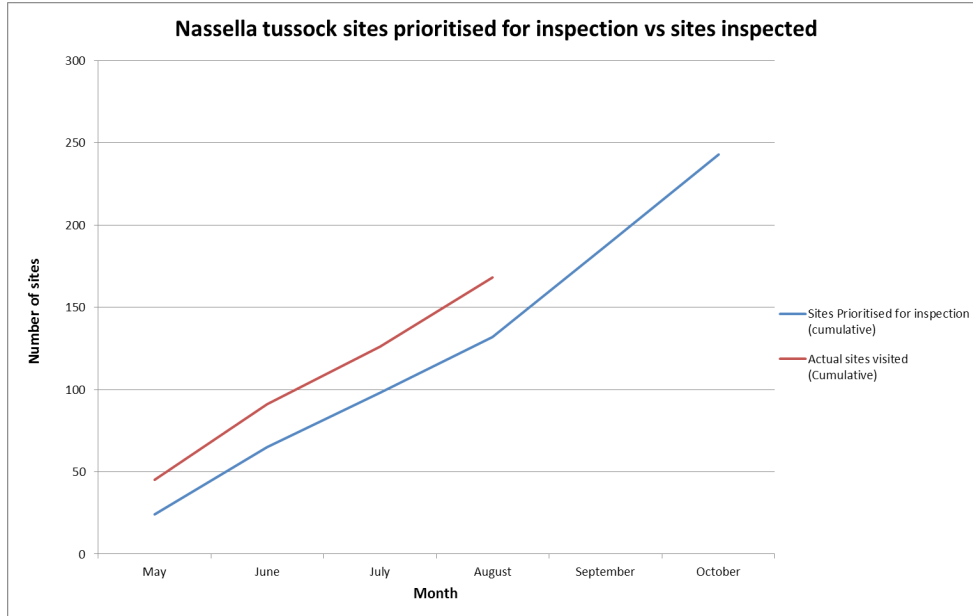
Close to 600 properties are known to have infestations of Nassella Tussock in Marlborough. These properties cover 166,851 hectares or 13% of the Marlborough District. The density of the Nassella Tussock infestations on these properties vary, but totals 53,397 hectares or 4.3% of the district.



The Nassella Tussock 2018 Programme

From 1 May 2018 to 24 August 2018 Council Biosecurity staff inspected 168 out of 243 prioritised inspections for 2018. Of the properties inspected eight were deemed non-compliant, three of which Council deemed it necessary to proceed with a Notice of Direction.

138 were on track to having their tussock under control for 2018. Out of these, Biosecurity inspectors identified 24 properties where the control work could have been carried out better. In these instances the land occupier has been advised to carry out remedial/follow up work.



Nassella Trend Monitoring

Early autumn this year Council Biosecurity staff undertook the first annual transect monitoring, to help measure the Nassella Tussock population density in the Marlborough region. This data will be collected annually from random points on randomly selected sites within the region. The data gathered is used to determine whether regional Nassella Tussock density is remaining stable over the long term (discounting seasonal variations).

This long term measure is required to ensure that the structure of the Nassella Programme will meet the long term objectives of keeping Nassella Tussock under sustained control. Other than anecdotes, the Council does not currently have any accurate data to gauge whether the regional Nassella population is remaining stable or not.

Expect to see a track record of the monitoring results here in the future.

Biological Control Agent for Nassella Tussock on the Horizon?

A meeting was held on 9 July 2018 with farmers interested in supporting a Sustainable Farming Fund (SFF) bid (led by Landcare scientist Seona Casonato) for funding research to develop and release a biological control agent (fungal) for Nassella Tussock. The work will piggyback on research previously carried out in Australia which looked promising, but was not completed because funding was withdrawn. Surveys indicated the presence of a fungal agent in Australia, Argentina and also New Zealand.

For a strong business case the bid must be submitted by a non-government agency, hence the need for a community group with a stand-alone committee that acts in support of the application. All those present agreed to be part of the interest group, with Kevin Lowe agreeing to act as key point of contact for the application.

However, an operational committee is yet to be formed. If the bid is successful, work would be expected to start in July 2019.

The research is supported by the NZ Landcare Trust (Managing Biosecurity Risks On Earthquake Affected Properties) Earthquake Recovery Biosecurity Project. The NZ Landcare Trust has agreed to undertake the financial management of the Nassella Tussock biocontrol research.

What can you do to help?

- To support the SFF application please take the time to complete the survey found at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KY93GCG>
- If you observe a Nassella plant that looks like it may be affected by a disease, please bring the specimen to Council Biosecurity. Council will forward the sample to Seona Casonato at Landcare for analysis.



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