

NPCA Newsletter



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NPCA provides a forum for agencies and stakeholders involved in vertebrate pest control to co-operatively address industry issues, share information, develop best practice and promote training/professional development. Any individual or organisation engaged in the vertebrate pest control industry is eligible for membership.

The NPCA is run by a management committee of six people and a National Co-ordinator.

Management committee:

Bill Martyn, (Chairperson), *Local Government New Zealand*

Mike Hawes, *Department of Conservation*

Brent Rohloff, *Animal Health Board*

Bruce Warburton, *Landcare Research*

Martin Brenstrum, *Contractor*

Sherman Smith, *Ministry for Primary Industries*

National Coordinator: Maurice Kennedy

NOTICE OF SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

NPCA has called a Special General Meeting to consider proposed amendments to the membership rules in the NPCA constitution.

When? 1.30 pm, Friday 22nd June 2012

Where? Board Room, Animal Health Board,
Level 9, Guardian Trust House,
15 Willeston Street, Wellington

The membership and closely aligned funding matters discussed will importantly affect NPCA's future operation and viability. Members are, therefore, urged to attend the meeting if possible.

Background

At NPCA's 2011 AGM, the NPCA Management Committee was charged with investigating the inter-related membership / funding / voting issues that had been discussed at the AGM, and reporting back to the membership with option(s) to be considered at a Special General Meeting.

The committee has prepared a 'Rule Changes' paper for circulation to the membership prior to the special meeting. The paper outlines the relevant background and issues and also summarises the value that NPCA delivers to the pest control industry in terms of services.

Please read the Rule Changes paper. If you are unable to attend the Special Meeting but wish to add your comments to the discussions, please send your comments to Maurice Kennedy at NPCA (see contact details below).

NETS CONFERENCE: 18—20 JULY 2012

Pests in our dynamic Landscapes: The pressure is on!



The NETS2012 conference programme has been finalised.

For more about the vertebrate pest component of the programme, see page 1 2-3.

Registrations are open

- Register online at www.biosecurity.org.nz/nets
- Early bird rates apply to registrations received on or before 10 June, so be in quick!

FROM THE CHAIR



Once again, I am using this forum to highlight the need for NPCA to keep improving in these times of continual change. We need to remain relevant and provide quality services to our members – and we need your input to do so.

In recent times we have implemented some really positive improvement. Part of this was becoming an Incorporated Society involving a name change that reflected our broadening scope to cater for a wider suite of vertebrate pests.

To keep pace with this new direction we now need to update our constitution. Issues needing attention include membership, funding and voting. As mandated at the last AGM, the Management Committee has been busy working on options and has developed proposed

new models to be considered and ratified at a Special General Meeting to be held early June (see page 1 for details).

As Chair I urge you to have your say concerning these changes: the Management Committee needs to get it right and lead NPCA into the future with a strong mandate from the membership.

Another new direction is, of course, the first joint NZ Biosecurity Institute / NPCA conference (NETs) that will be happening in July. We are very happy that the style and integrity of NPCA tech transfer has been preserved with exciting practical training options thrown in as a development of our highly successful 2009 workshops. We would like to see good numbers of you there and would appreciate your feedback.

These are busy and exciting times! Take care.

Bill Martyn

NPCA Chairperson



NETS2012 CONFERENCE: PESTS IN OUR DYNAMIC LANDSCAPES: THE PRESSURE IS ON!

The conference committee has been working hard to develop a programme for the first combined NPCA / NZBI conference that covers the diverse range of issues that the biosecurity sector contends with country-wide.

PROGRAMME IN BRIEF

Wednesday 18 July

A.M.: - Presentations on general biosecurity issues.

P.M.: - Presentations running in parallel on:

- Weeds,
- Insects & Diseases
- Vertebrate Pests

Thursday 19 July

A.M.: - Presentations on general biosecurity issues.

- Presentations running in parallel on:

- Weeds,
- Insects & Diseases
- Vertebrate Pests

P.M.: - Field Trips

- *Southern Lake Trip*: bus trip to see local projects
- *Cruising the Crater (Lake Taupo)*: issues affecting

the lake.

- *Busting Clays*: compete for the annual claybird shooting trophy.
- *Rangitaiki Station*: large farm property, focus of intensive TB vector control & protecting biodiversity values.
- *Taupo, More than a Geothermal Wonderland*: restoration and pest control work at geothermal sites.

Friday 20 July

A.M.: - Workshops running in parallel on:

- *Weeds Database*: predictive modelling of weed risk.
- *Pests & Communities*: practical ways to get communities interested and involved in pest control efforts.
- *GPS, Photos & Plant ID*: interactive onsite guidance.
- *Monitoring (NPCA)*: monitoring vertebrate pests.
- *Toxins (NPCA)*: use of PAPP and zinc phosphide.

The full conference programme can be downloaded from www.biosecurity.org.nz/nets.

NETS2012 CONFERENCE: (CONT'D)

VERTEBRATE PEST PRESENTATIONS

The sessions on Wednesday and Thursday will include the following thirteen presentations :

Assessing the sensitivity of interference-based monitoring devices to possum presence.
Matt Kavermann, Lincoln University

Non-target monitoring following aerial 1080 possum control in the Hauhungaroa Ranges.
Graham Nugent, Landcare Research

Using less 1080 in aerial baiting: cluster-and strip-sowing update.
Grant Morris, Landcare Research

Pindone residues in rabbits.
Penny Fisher, Landcare Research

Proving TB Freedom in North Canterbury.
Andrew Gormmley, Animal Health Board

Lures to monitor and control vertebrate pests at low densities: sex pheromone attractants.
Janine Duckworth, Landcare Research

Monitor & Manage the Marsupial Menace: Computer games for decision making.
Pen Holland, Landcare Research

Refining Operational Practices for Controlling Rabbits on Agricultural Lands.
A. David, Landcare Research

Self-resetting traps for ground based pest control for conservation in New Zealand forests – early results.
Craig Gillies, Dept of Conservation

How good are we at trapping possums? - Possum interaction rates with traps.
Samantha Brown, Landcare Research

A cheap single capture trap for stoats & rats.
Grant Morriss, Landcare Research

Eliminating wild deer in Northland - Lessons learned from a multiagency response.
Don McKenzie, Northland Regional Council

Amendment of the National Pest Management Strategy for Bovine Tuberculosis: Approaches for Eradication of Tuberculosis from Wildlife in New Zealand.
William McCook, Animal Health Board

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WORKSHOP TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

We're delighted that Bruce Warburton (see right) and Steve Hix have stepped forward to run the two NPCA workshops on the Friday morning.

NPCA is aware of the distance some members must travel to attend the conference and has been keen to ensure that practical training opportunities are included in the programme, as well as the social interaction and exchange of information that the conference offers.

Both workshops will be hands-on, interactive sessions, and an invaluable chance to upskill.

Monitoring Workshop

Bruce Warburton, Landcare Research

Which monitoring method to use and for which species of vertebrate pest?

This workshop will cover the key points in selecting correct monitoring methods with a focus on the strengths and weaknesses of each method as well as when and where to use them.

Toxins (NPCA)

Steve Hix, Connovation Ltd

This workshop and training session is on the safe use and handling of both PAPP and zinc phosphide.

It will cover how to prepare baits for placement in the field and may include some field work in the venue grounds.

VENUE & ACCOMMODATION

The venue, Wairakei Resort, is 5 minutes drive north of Taupo township.

The resort has set aside 187 rooms for delegates. All rooms can sleep up to two people comfortably. Divans and daybeds are available on request. For a virtual tour of some of their room types, please view their website page on www.conferencetaupo.co.nz.

NETS delegates are offered a Bed and Cooked Buffet Breakfast rate of \$169.00 per room per night single occupancy and \$189.00 per room per night twin share (up to two persons, so \$95 each), GST inclusive. If you wish to stay on for the weekend after NETS to enjoy some of the activities in this amazing area, these same rates will apply.

As Wairakei is very close to Taupo, a wide range of accommodation is also available there at varying rates - simply go to Mr Google and check out your options.

Contact Carolyn Lewis, NETS2012 Conference Organiser for any further information at: carolyn.lewis@xtra.co.nz

NEW NAME FOR MAF

MAF has changed its name to the Ministry for Primary Industries, Manatū Ahu Matua (MPI).

The name change has been initiated to better reflect the organisation's new functions, following its merger with the New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) and the Ministry of Fisheries over the past two years.

The new name represents all of the new Ministry's work across the agricultural, horticultural, aquaculture, fisheries, forestry and food sectors, as well as the protection of our primary industries from biological risk.

The overall objective behind MPI's formation is for the primary production sectors to be successful. Together, these sectors generate over 70% of New Zealand's merchandise export earnings – more than \$29 billion last year.

A more integrated approach is envisaged, with MPI helping to manage resources and risks, support innovation and productivity, and provide assurances and market access. The Ministry intends this to happen within a clear, consistent regulatory framework that protects the long-term viability of the sectors.

The Ministry remains the main gateway to government for the primary sectors, a role that will have less emphasis on regulation and enforcement.

Science will still underpin MPI decisions in many areas, together with greater transfer of technology and science to build capability in the sectors.

Where does vertebrate pest control fit?

MPI's new Compliance and Response branch is responsible for surveillance, investigation, diagnostic and enforcement functions in relation to pest incursions, animal welfare, food safety and fisheries. The majority of the functions previously undertaken by the old Pest Management Group now sit within this branch.

The Compliance and Response Branch leads a range of operational programmes and coordinates partnership based initiatives, including:

- coordinating programmes to improve preparedness to respond to biosecurity outbreaks or food events;
- building response operational capability through a National Biosecurity Capability Network;
- national surveillance programmes for demonstrating freedom from disease (to support export trade) and for early detection of new-to-NZ incursions;
- investigation, diagnostics, and response management for pests and diseases, where there is an eradication objective;

- long term management of established pests and diseases where eradication is not feasible;
- enforcement functions in relation to animal welfare, food safety and fisheries;
- coordinating partnership-based programmes where collective effort brings benefits, e.g. coordinated approach to improving management of rabbits;
- establishing the Government Industry Agreements for preparedness and responses to pests and diseases of concern to both MPI and industry;
- managing the Crown's investment in the bovine Tb National Pest Management Strategy (delivered by the Animal Health Board).

The Ministry is currently identifying and prioritising the actions it needs to take over the next 3-5 years and, over the coming months, will be talking with stakeholders about how to implement its strategy.

ANIMAL WELFARE STRATEGY UPDATE

One of MPI's initiatives is leading the development of a national strategy for animal welfare, which will set the future direction of animal welfare in New Zealand and outline the Government's key priorities over the next few years.

Alongside the strategy, MPI is undertaking a review of the Animal Welfare Act 1999.

The draft strategy is likely to focus on the integrity of New Zealand's animal welfare system and ensuring that animals' welfare needs are met. The legislation proposals will aim to create a wider range of compliance tools in the Act, providing greater flexibility for managing animal welfare risks and allowing the animal welfare system to evolve as societal expectations shift. Some technical amendments will also be proposed.

"The MPI project team has obtained input from key stakeholders such as vets, animal industries, animal advocacy groups, and users of animals in research and teaching. It has also worked with a specially-convened stakeholder advisory group", says MPI Policy Manager, Colin Holden.

"We have made good progress on the strategy and Act review, and we're on track to consult the public on proposals during August this year, providing everyone with an interest in animal welfare the opportunity to have their say."

Final strategy and legislative proposals will be presented to the Minister for Primary Industries in late 2012 or early 2013. An amendment Bill is intended to be introduced into the House during the first half of 2013.

The new Ministry's website address is

<http://www.mpi.govt.nz/> - explore under 'Biosecurity and Animal Welfare / Pests and Diseases'.

For information about the Animal Welfare Strategy:

<http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/regs/animal-welfare/strategy-legislation-review>

FERATOX® REGISTERED FOR BENNETT'S WALLABY

Another tool is now available for the control of Bennett's wallaby in New Zealand, following registration of Feratox pellets for this purpose in October 2011.

Bennett's wallabies were introduced in the Hunter Hills of South Canterbury in the 1870s. They subsequently became such a significant pest in the area, that a Wallaby Destruction Committee was set up. In 1970, the South Canterbury Wallaby Board Control Unit was formed. Under the unit's systematic control, wallaby numbers declined steadily but rose again markedly after the Board was disbanded in 1992, when farmers took over wallaby control.

Most control to date has been by ground shooting, including some large culls; re-infestation between properties is an ongoing problem, however. Environment Canterbury is working with landowners to better co-ordinate their control efforts and is actively informing farmers about the welcome addition of the Feratox control tool.

The Bennett's wallaby pellet was developed after Feratox was registered for use on Dama wallabies in 2009.

"Field trials, carried out with Environment Canterbury in 2009 indicated high field efficacy that complemented the results of earlier cage trials," says Steve Hix, Product Transition Manager with Connovation Ltd.

"The encapsulation of cyanide in the Feratox pellets means that gas emissions are virtually undetectable, and that overcomes potential bait shyness amongst these intelligent animals. It's a humane control method with low secondary poisoning risk."

Further detailed guidance on best practice use, visit the Connovation website www.connovation.co.nz

Acknowledgements: The Bennett's wallaby toxin was developed through the joint efforts of Connovation Ltd, Downer EDI Works Ltd, Bio-protection and Ecology Division, Lincoln University and ECAN.



The pellets are set in 8 striker plate bait stations fixed to wooden stakes, placed in clusters approximately 100 metres apart along ridge lines that intersect wallaby feeding and living areas.



One of the field trial sites: three of the eight wallabies that died at this site are circled. The animals die close to the bait stakes (pictured left), facilitating monitoring and carcass recovery

SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST: A CONTRACTOR COUPLE'S STORY

Judy and Tony Leith, of South Island-based Leith Contractors Ltd, have been in the pest control business for more than 25 years, adapting to changes in the industry along the way.

It's an outdoor life that has suited them both. Tony has been possuming since he was a kid growing up on the Catlins coast, where he learnt the requisite skills from his father and brothers, who were all possum hunters. Judy grew up on a dairy farm so she was used to hard outdoor work.

"I had to learn bush and possuming skills after I met Tony, though. I got a tracking dog and did my own lines. It was hard work - all around the Catlins - but I loved it," she recalls.

Remote beginnings

When their kids were small, Tony worked for a logging company and caught possums to supplement their income. Then, in 1987, the Leith's went up to South Westland for 9 months, where they were soon joined by Tony's brothers and uncle. They enrolled the kids at Jacobs River School and, using the local helicopter operator, possum hunted the higher reaches of many of the valleys between Franz Josef and Lake Moeraki using cyanide.

"There were hardly any possum hunters there in those days," Tony recalls. "The Coasters possumed for only three or four months a year and they didn't know what to make of us with our year-round operation."

Nearly all the skins in the area were dark and, as luck would have it, there was a huge demand for black fur that year. The Leith's did so well they were able to buy a second home.

Over the next ten years they continued to work in South Westland and Fiordland, taking on ground control contract work for DOC. They worked from Big Bay in Fiordland to Otira in Arthurs Pass including the Whataroa, Landsborough and Copland Valleys on a regular basis, using helicopters to move their gear, supplies, dogs and portable hut from one location to another.

"We would stay for twenty days at a time. The kids were at boarding school in Invercargill by that time so it was just me and Tony and no-one else around," Judy recalls. "We lived pretty basically but it was majestic country and we worked every part of those valleys right up to the snow line."

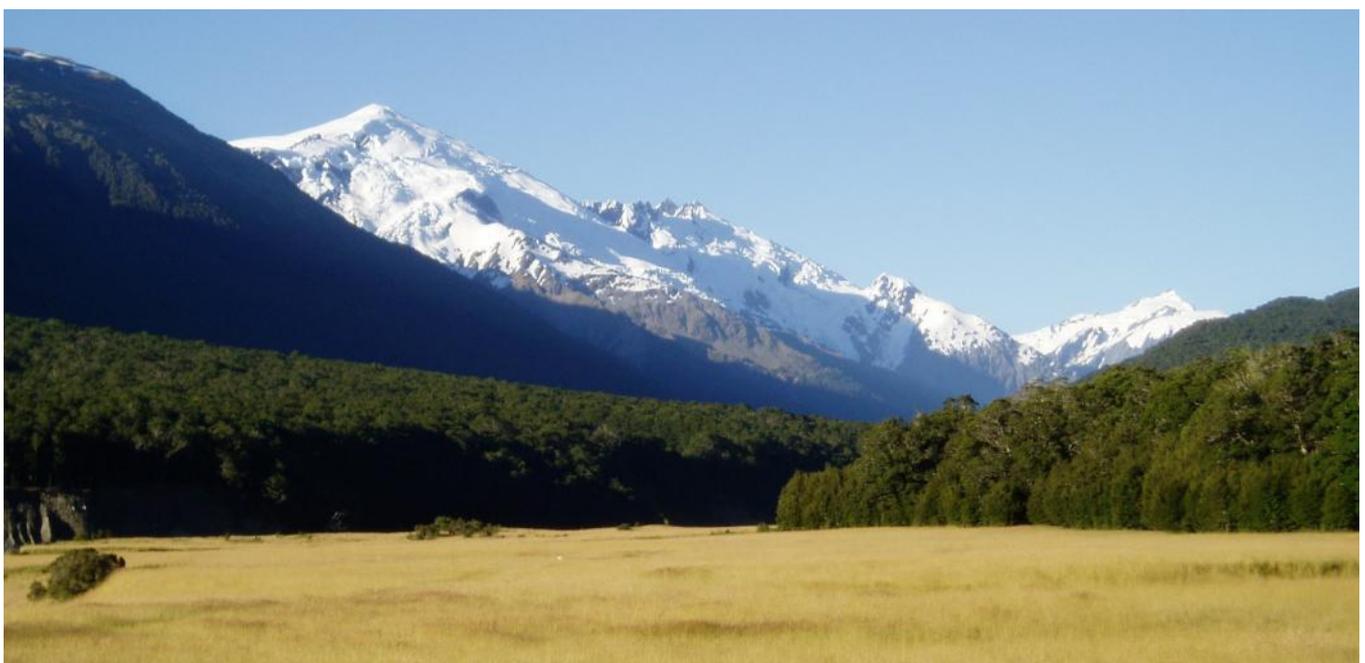
In 1994, when DOC introduced individual performance contracts, the Leith's were among the first possum contractors to work under the new system.

"It was great timing for us, as we were poised to get into private contracting," Tony says. "Under performance contracting we got used to working to performance targets and so, when the Animal Health Board work started in Southland in 1997, we were one step ahead of the others and got a big chunk of the work."

Leith Contractors gets launched

Judy and Tony established Leith Contractors Ltd in 1997, contracting mainly to Environment Southland, which was managing Tb vector control for the Animal Health Board (AHB). They set up a structure of sub-contractor teams; mainly extended family in which, as Tony put it, "everyone got stuck in and did their job".

Administration inevitably grew, along with the sub-contractor team. They bought a computer and Judy



A favourite destination, the Landsborough Valley. Crown Copyright: Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai (2005)

found herself working increasingly in the office – a huge learning curve after so many years of working in the bush. Tony, meanwhile, managed the field operations, leading the way with acquiring and applying new technology such as GPS mapping to meet client requirements.

The AHB programme attracted a lot of contractors to set up in Southland, so that when the AHB focus shifted to the West Coast in the early 2000s and with the stiff competition for the diminishing work in Southland, the Leith's decided to follow the work. In 2004 they shifted their operation base to Westport, where they remained until 2008. Work was plentiful, including in addition to AHB contracts, work for Pike River Coal and Oceana Gold coal mines and DOC Te Anau.

It was difficult to replicate the strong team they had had in Southland, however. Staffing issues were a problem, compounded by worker resistance to phasing in the new GPS technology.

"We had a team of 15 guys but most of them didn't have the knowledge of the bush and weren't able to work as a team," Tony recalls. "Pest control contracting is a very specialised job and it was hard to find people with the necessary skills."

In 2008 the Leith's moved their business back to their home base in the Catlins to be closer to family and, in the meantime, AHB's Tb-free objective for Southland meant work there was rebuilding.

Burnt out and wanting to have more time to themselves, they chose to downsize to a more manageable operation. Nowadays, as well as AHB work, they periodically carry out work for DoC in their old Fiordland stamping grounds, and Judy manages to get out of the office into the outdoors managing their farmlet and accommodation business at Waikawa.

"Back in Southland, we found many of the contractors had closed up shop," Tony says. "There's so much more requirement on reporting, consent process and training, not to mention the IT side of things. A lot couldn't manage the changes or didn't want to."

"There's been a massive change in technology since we started. I've been using it since day one – it's what the client wants but it's also a whole lot easier for managing data and managing field operations. Pest contracting is not like being on a building site; you can't see what work has been done or where. The GPS technology and digital downloading is such a good control and monitoring tool."

Looking back, the early years in remote South Westland and Fiordland would be the highlight for both Tony and Judy. "The whole thing was an adventure – living in the outdoors in extreme conditions, being self-sufficient and the challenge of a new valley and another experience. It was like our OE – but in the back country of New Zealand."

Meanwhile, back in the Catlins, where the Leith's property overlooks the Waikawa River estuary, life – and pest control – goes on.

TRACKING DOGS

When the Leith family started using dogs to track lines many years ago they were amongst the first along with the Gutsell family. Today, Tony reckons about 50% of contractors use them.

"It saves about 30-40% of the time to lay out and manage a bait or trap line, as there's no need to cut a track or mark each line" he says.

Tracking dogs are specially trained to follow close behind when the contractor lays out a pre-feed bait line or trap line. No-one understands how the dogs do it, but next time, when the contractor returns to lay out the poison, the dog, on command to 'get on', leads the way along the exact same line.

Training a young dog is an intensive process, taking about two years and involving the youngster working alongside an experienced dog.

"It's more a case of memory than smell as some can go back three years later and still follow the same line," Tony says. "Some dogs have a better temperament than others and are much more suited to tracking."

The tracking dogs don't chase the possums and when the Leith's were possuming for skins they commanded some of their bigger dogs, which were specially trained, to retrieve the dead possums that had fallen a distance from the poison bait.



Judy and Tony Leith with two of their tracking dogs.

NEW MEMBER ON THE NPCA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



BRUCE WARBURTON

Bruce is senior scientist, capability, and programme leader in the Wildlife, Ecology, and Management team at Landcare Research, Lincoln.

His long career as a research scientist began with his university studies in zoology, which led to his first job, in 1977, as a scientist with the Forest Research Institute. He worked at the Institute for fifteen years before science restructuring led to his shift to Landcare Research in 1992. Since 1998, Bruce has had both team leader and management roles in research related to pest impacts and multi-species pest control strategies.

Bruce served on the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee for nine years and has been recognised by the Royal Society of New Zealand for his significant contribution to animal welfare research. He has also received the Peter Nelson Memorial Awards from the New Zealand Biosecurity Institute for his contribution to pest management in New Zealand. Bruce also has a secondment with the Animal Health Board, and acts as an advisor to the development of MAF's Future of Pest Management Toolbox.

PEST CONTROL QUALIFICATIONS UNDER REVIEW

The NPCA had been involved in coordinating inputs from stakeholder organisations into a review of pest qualifications.

This input is part of a NZQA review of all qualifications at Levels 1-6 in the Agriculture cluster, initiated in response to concerns raised by industry groups, employees and employers about qualification clarity, relevance and potential duplication.

The objective with the agriculture cluster is to collaboratively develop a national portfolio of levels 1-6 agricultural qualifications that are needs-based, focussed on outcomes and flexible.

To facilitate the review the agriculture cluster has been split into seven working groups, of which pest control is part of the Rural Services group, along with agrichemicals. A governance group has been formed to oversee and monitor the progress of the review, including identifying links across sub-sectors.

Stakeholder organisations that the NPCA has been working with include regional councils, Animal Health Board, Department of Conservation, Ministry of Primary Industries and PestNET. The purpose is to produce an overview report on the pest management industry that includes the strategic and economic importance of the industry, overall scale of the workforce, impact of training and the required skills knowledge and attributes for those engaged in the industry.

The stakeholder organisations met in mid April to progress the report. although the meeting highlighted the complexity of the pest management industry, the report is due for completion by 31 May, at which time it will be made available through the NPCA website.

From that point, the qualifications review process will proceed to addressing policy issues and preparing graduate profiles.