PineNet Newsletter

The newsletter for biosecurity readiness and response teams in the forestry sector

Issue 5/May 2018

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2018.

Joint MPI/FOA Forest Biosecurity Conference

The theme of this year's conference was 'social licence to operate, licence to use tomorrow's toolbox?' It explored how government and industries can gain and maintain social licence to operate, particularly in the controversial area of aerial spraying in the event of a biosecurity incursion in an urban area. The attendees debated whether or not MPI and industry could claim they have social licence, and how can we tell?

The keynote speaker, Tim Ebata, Programme Manager at the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resources and Rural Development in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada provided the attendees with a range of practical examples of what they have found works well, and what has not (and the lessons they learned) in combatting gypsy moth incursions in residential neighbourhoods. For example, they learned early that mass communications and social media are only one strand of communicating with residents, and that the Ministry needs to give people opportunities for face-to-face and telephone contact as well, so they have a chance to talk through their concerns and have these addressed personally. The also learned that the "town-hall" approach didn't work nearly as well as the "open-home" style where interested people could walk in and speak to experts individually or in small groups.

John Walsh, Communications Manager and MPI gave insight into how the myrtle rust incursion has worked to raise the profile of biosecurity in New Zealand, and some of the positive and negative spin-offs from it.

Virginia Hope, Medical Director at ESR provided a human health perspective, based on her experience in the painted apple moth incursion 17 years ago, emphasising the emotive aspect of human health and how to manage the public's concerns, even though some of them may not be rational.

Scion scientists presents a range of work in progress towards the Toolbox for Tomorrow programme, highlighting work on genomics and molecular tools, and demonstrating how they have created a device to read electrical impulses from moths, which will aid in detecting pest species where trapping is not an effective detective mechanism.

The programme, keynote address and the presentations are on the FOA website.

The keynote speaker, Tim Ebata, providing insights on what to do, and what NOT to do to gain social licence to operate.

His presentation is on the FOA website.

Update on Myrtle Rust

The myrtle rust response has moved to long-term management. This means that eradication has been deemed impossible, and control of the disease is the most cost-effective biosecurity option. This will have implications for MPI and will involve liaison with iwi, councils, and other stakeholders over the coming months.

The total number of infections on eucalyptus species remains at one but please remain vigilant about checking and reporting any disease symptoms to MPI via their website, the myrtle rust reporter app, and the 0800 number. The FOA is keeping a watching eye on developments and will ensure PineNet members are aware of any relevant updates.

The MPI media release on this development is on their website.

Forest Biosecurity Surveillance System – the rollout is happening

The pilot for testing the Forest Biosecurity Surveillance (FBS) System model (developed for FOA/FFA by Scion and a range of other biosecurity experts) was completed in January this year. The pilot, conducted by ground survey plot surveillance in Auckland, Taupo, and Invercargill, determined the pilot model was feasible and recommended rolling it out nationally.

The survey, not surprisingly, found that *Pinus radiata* is not as common in Auckland as compared with Taupo and Invercargill, which has implications for numbers and locations of inspection plots. But overall, there are sufficient species of forestry trees present to enable the specified number of transects to be established. Auckland Harbourside was an exception, where the land was taken by buildings and infrastructure. As a result of the pilot, the model will be optimised and adjusted.

The costs of survey are similar to the Forest Health Surveillance scheme and the budget for the new FBS is currently being determined, as are cost-sharing negotiations with MPI.

Nursery Biosecurity Standard Developments – working with MPI and NZPPI

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) has commissioned the New Zealand Plant Producers Incorporated (NZPPI) to lead development of a plant production biosecurity scheme, which will basically be a nursery biosecurity standard to reduce the risk of plant pests and pathogens being transported around the country. The Forestry Biosecurity Manager sits on the steering committee, which has now met twice.

Over the next six months, NZPPI will work with industry, MPI and other stakeholders to design a plant production biosecurity standard and manual. This consultative process will determine key considerations such as how the scheme will run and how to upskill industry.

Through the process industry and stakeholders will consider the balance between voluntary or mandatory scheme, which is the best way to achieve the outcomes we desire and how either may operate to the benefit of industry and New Zealand's biosecurity. At some point later in the year, industry will need to decide whether the scheme will be voluntary or mandatory.

More information is on the NZPPI website.

GIA –Joint readiness activities

The Forestry Biosecurity Manager met with other Plant Sector Biosecurity Managers (there are now 10) in early April to discuss opportunities to work together to reduce biosecurity risk. A biosecurity science workshop is planned for 9 May in Wellington, following the Better Border Biosecurity conference, to compare strategies and identify key science issues that can be put forward for government funding.

Forest research update

Scion is working on a couple of key biosecurity initiatives.

- **Red needle cast**. An epidemiological model is being developed, which analyses data to predict the spread and prevalence of the disease using geospatial modelling and a climatic risk model. The aim is to develop a tool that assists forest managers to determine when to spray for the disease and when is the optimum time economically to do so.
- A **nursery biosecurity accreditation stocktake**. This project is collating information to help develop the accreditation scheme. Information from a number of data sources has been reviewed, and will feed into a report summarising the methods nurseries use to minimise the spread and impact of pests and pathogens, as well as provide a database resource for this information.

MPI is taking biosecurity very seriously

News articles in the media recently have highlighted MPI's vigilance at ensuring the borders of New Zealand are protected. You may have heard about a number of ships carrying cargo infested with brown marmorated stink bugs being turned away from ports. It is good to see this vigilance also translates to passenger risks too.

A recent article in the Border Space newsletter from MPI highlighted a case where two passengers from Switzerland were refused entry to New Zealand off a flight from Sydney. The passengers said they deliberately did not declare hiking boots soiled with dirt from tramping because they feared having the boots confiscated. They found out quickly that being refused entry to New Zealand is a whole lot worse an outcome than just letting MPI inspect the boots on arrival.

For any queries on items in this newsletter or other biosecurity questions, contact Venise Comfort venise.comfort@nzfoa.org.nz