

Biosecurity Operational Plan 2025-2026



Implementing the Otago Regional Pest Management Plan 2019-2029

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Biosecurity Operational Plan 2025 - 2026

Date: April 2025

Author: M. Ewans, Biosecurity Specialist - Terrestrial

Owner: R. Win, Team Leader – Biosecurity

Reviewed By: M. Boardman, Performance and Reporting Specialist – Environmental Delivery Data & Systems

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Cover Photo

Rocky Mountain, Wanaka (Photo Credit: Robert Win)

1. Summary

1.1 Introduction

Under the Biosecurity Act (1993), the Otago Regional Council (ORC) is the regional management agency responsible for biosecurity and pest control. To achieve this regulatory function, ORC has developed the *Otago Regional Pest Management Plan 2019-2029* (RPMP) which sets objectives and rules for land occupiers to control pests to set levels.

Where a regional pest management plan is enacted, ORC is further required to prepare an annual operational plan that implements the RPMP. The Operational Plan is a publicly available document and is reported on each year to Council.

This document (*Biosecurity Operational Plan 2025-2026*) outlines the nature, scope, and priority activities that ORC intends to undertake for pest management across the Otago region for the financial year 1 July 2025 through to 30 June 2026. For context, it is important the Operational Plan is read in conjunction with the RPMP. Where necessary, changes have been made from previous operational plans based on lessons learnt to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

1.2 Programmes of Work

Under the RPMP, pest management is classified into five programmes.

- 1. Exclusion pest programme:** This programme will ensure specific pests that are present in New Zealand do not become established in Otago. Under Section 100V of the Biosecurity Act, there is provision to implement emergency controls for the incursion of any new pests that are not listed in the RPMP.
- 2. Eradication pest programme:** This programme focuses on eradicating identified pests from the areas where they occur in the region. Eradication involves reducing the infestation of the pest to zero density.
- 3. Progressive containment pest programme:** This programme aims to contain and reduce the geographic spread of the listed pests to specific areas. Containment arises where the pest is at high densities in specific parts of the Otago region, but in low densities or limited range in other parts. While eradication is not feasible, it is realistic to contain the pest from spreading to other 'clear' parts of the region.
- 4. Sustained control pest programme:** This programme centres on the continuing control of the listed pests to reduce their impacts and spread to other properties. The emphasis is to manage the densities of the pests so they do not reach a level where they cause significant environmental impact. Sustained control is a strategy for pests with a wide geographical spread that they cannot feasibly be contained.
- 5. Site-led pest programmes:** This programme aims to exclude or – if present – eradicate, reduce or control, identified pests from specified locations.

1.3 Methods of Action

ORC achieves pest management outcomes through the following methods and provision of resources.

1. **Advocacy and education:** ORC will provide education, advice, and information to landowners and/or occupiers and the public about the impacts of pests and pathways (vectors) of pest spread and appropriate methods of control. The ORC will ensure land occupiers are informed of their responsibilities under the RPMP. This activity also includes contributing to research and cost-sharing with other agencies and developing/promoting 'good practice' around control methods aimed at pest management contractors and occupiers who are required to act.
2. **Inspection, monitoring, and surveillance:** Regular property inspections ensure that RPMP rules are being adhered to. The focus is to achieve voluntary compliance first before enforcement action is initiated. Monitoring is carried out to determine effectiveness of control and to understand trends of infestations. Surveillance activities focus on protecting the region from the incursion of new pests.
3. **Collaboration:** ORC works with landowner/occupier groups and central and local government agencies to develop consistent approaches for the effective management of pests. This includes Land Information New Zealand (LINZ), Department of Conservation (DOC), Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI), neighbouring regional councils and community groups like Predator Free Dunedin, and wilding conifer trusts.
4. **Requirement to Act (regulation):** RPMP rules are the 'backbone' of the pest management. These rules require identified pests to be controlled to specified standards or levels. Failure to comply with RPMP rules can lead to enforcement action by ORC.
5. **Service delivery:** This is achieved through the delivery of national programmes (wildings and wallabies) and the provision of direct control where special expertise is required that is beyond the capability of the land occupier to arrange. Service delivery includes engaging contractors to provide appropriate control tools (e.g. traps, spraying, shooting) and the approved release of biological control agents.

This work is supported by close engagement with organisations involved in implementing and funding biosecurity across the region, including the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), Land Information New Zealand (LINZ), the Department of Conservation (DOC), Kāi Tahu, other councils and community groups.

1.4 Operational Plan Reporting

As the lead management agency, ORC is responsible for reporting on activities and progress during the year. ORC is required by Section 100B of the Biosecurity Act 1993 to *"prepare a report on the operational plan and its implementation not later than 5 months after the end of each financial year"*. This report is provided to the Minister of Biosecurity and is made available to the public through reporting to Council and on ORC's website.

2. Exclusion Pest Programme

2.1 Exclusion Pest Species

Objective: Over the duration of RPMP, preclude establishment of African feather grass, Chilean needle grass, egeria, false tamarisk, hornwort, and moth plant within the Otago region to prevent adverse effects on economic well-being and environmental values.

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Undertake incursion response.	a	% of investigations commenced within 2 working days of a suspected exclusion pest sighting.	100%
		b	% of incursion response plans ¹ enacted within 5 working days of incursion confirmation.	100%

¹ Please see Otago Biosecurity Incursion Response Plan for detail.

3. Eradication Pest Programme

3.1 Bennett's wallaby

Objective: Reduce all infestations of Bennett's wallaby to zero levels within the Otago region to prevent adverse effects on economic well-being and the environment.

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Undertake incursion response.	a	Response ² within 5 working days of a reported wallaby sighting.	100%
2	Collaborate with and participate in the national wallaby programme.	a	% of Operational Advisory Group meetings attended.	100%
		b	Fulfil requirements of MPI funding agreement.	100%

3.2 Rooks

Objective: Reduce all infestations of rooks to zero levels within the Otago region to prevent adverse effects on economic well-being and the environment.

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Undertake incursion response process.	a	% of investigations commenced within 2 working days of a suspected eradication pest sighting, to confirm an incursion.	100%
		b	% of incursion response plans enacted within 5 working days after incursion confirmed.	100%
2	Undertake monitoring.	a	Develop an annual Work Plan for monitoring of all known rookeries, prior to July 2025.	1
		b	100% of known sites monitored as described in the annual Work Plan.	100%
3	Raise awareness.	a	% of communication, education, and awareness initiatives completed as described in the annual Work Plan.	100%

3.3 Spiny broom

Objective: Reduce all infestations of spiny broom to zero levels within the Otago region to prevent adverse effects on economic well-being and the environment.

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Undertake incursion response.	a	% investigations commenced within 2 working days of a suspected exclusion pest sighting, to confirm an incursion.	100%

² Response includes any form of classification and field visit

		b	% incursion response plans enacted within 5 working days of confirmation of incursion.	100%
2	Undertake monitoring.	a	Develop an annual Work Plan for monitoring of spiny broom at known sites, prior to July 2025.	1
		b	% of known sites monitored as described in the annual Work Plan.	100%
3	Facilitate control.	a	Where spiny broom is found at a known sites as identified in the annual Work Plan, control of those plants is undertaken prior to the next seeding event occurring.	100%
4	Raise awareness.	a	% of communication, education, and awareness initiatives completed, as described in the annual Work Plan.	100%

4. Progressive Containment Pest Programme

4.1 Wilding conifers

Objective: Progressively contain and reduce the geographic extent of wilding conifers within the Otago Region to minimise adverse effects on economic well-being and the environment.

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Implement regional wilding conifer strategy.	a	% of actions from the regional strategy commenced within specified due timeframes.	100%
2	Collaborate with and participate in the national wilding conifer programme.	a	% of Operational Advisory Group meetings attended.	100%
		b	% of requirements of MPI funding agreement fulfilled.	100%

4.2 African love grass

Objective: Progressively contain and reduce the geographic distribution or extent of African love grass (ALG) at known sites within the Otago region to minimise or prevent adverse effects on economic well-being and the environment.

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Undertake monitoring.	a	Develop an annual Work Plan for monitoring of known ALG sites prior to July 2025.	1
		b	% of known ALG sites monitored as described in the annual Work Plan.	100%
2	Facilitate control.	a	In any site, where ALG is found and where control is determined to be required, control is undertaken prior to the next seeding event occurring.	100%

4.3 Nassella tussock

Objective: Progressively contain and reduce the geographic distribution or extent of Nassella tussock at known locations within the Otago region to minimise or prevent adverse effects on economic well-being and the environment.

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Undertake inspections.	a	Develop an annual Work Plan for inspections of known Nassella tussock sites prior to July 2025.	1
		b	% of known sites inspected as described in the annual Work Plan.	100%
2	Facilitate control.	a	In any <u>new sites</u> , where Nassella tussock is found, appropriate actions are undertaken to facilitate control to the required level for Nassella tussock in Otago.	100%

		b	Where a new site is identified, re-inspections will occur within required timeframes to ensure appropriate control is being undertaken.	100%
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4.4 Old Man's Beard

Objective: Progressively contain and reduce the geographic distribution or extent of old man's beard (OMB) within the Otago region to minimise or prevent adverse effects on economic well-being and the environment.

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Undertake inspections.	a	Develop an annual Work Plan for inspections in known OMB sites in Otago, where those sites intersect with areas of identified high-value biodiversity, prior to July 2025.	1
		b	% of known sites inspected, as described in the annual Work Plan.	100%
2	Facilitate control.	a	In any <u>new sites</u> , where old man's beard is found, appropriate actions are undertaken to facilitate control to the required level for OMB in Otago.	100%
		b	Where a <u>new site</u> is identified, re-inspections will occur within required timeframes to ensure a control is being undertaken.	100%

4.5 Spartina

Objective: Progressively contain and reduce the geographic distribution or extent of spartina within the Otago region to minimise or prevent adverse effects on economic well-being and the environment.

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Undertake monitoring.	a	Develop an annual Work Plan for monitoring of known spartina sites in Otago, prior to July 2025.	1
		b	% of known sites monitored, as described in the annual Work Plan.	100%
2	Facilitate control.	a	In any site, where spartina is found, facilitate control to occur with landowner or external agencies prior to the next seeding event occurring.	100%
3	Remote sensing.	a	Undertake an investigation into the use of remote sensing for spartina with a view to create efficiencies within the programme by 30 June 2026.	1

4.5 Containment Pest Plants

Objective: Progressively contain and reduce the geographic distribution or extent of bomarea, boneseed, bur daisy, cape ivy, perennial nettle and white-edged nightshade within the Otago region to minimise or prevent adverse effects on economic well-being and the environment.

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Undertake inspections.	a	Develop an annual Work Plan for known containment pest plants in Otago, prior to July 2025.	1
		b	% of known sites inspections, as described in the annual Work Plan.	100%
2	Facilitate control.	a	In any <u>new sites</u> , where containment pest plants are found, appropriate actions are undertaken to facilitate control to the required level for containment pest plants in Otago.	100%
		b	Where a <u>new site</u> is identified, re-inspections will occur within the required timeframes to ensure control is being undertaken.	100%

5. Sustained Control Pest Programme

5.1 Feral Rabbits

Objective: Implement sustained control of feral rabbits to ensure population levels do not exceed Level 3 on the Modified McLean Scale to minimise adverse effects on production and environmental values within the Otago region.

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Undertake inspections.	a	Develop an annual Work Plan for rabbit inspections in Otago, prior to July 2025.	1
		b	% of sites inspected, as described in the annual Work Plan.	100%
2	Facilitate control.	a	In any inspected site, where rabbit control is required, appropriate actions are undertaken to facilitate control to at or below MMS 3 for rabbits in Otago.	100%
3	Community rabbit programme.	a	Develop an annual Work Plan for community rabbit programmes in Otago, prior to July 2025.	1
		b	% of community rabbit programmes where landowner engagement is undertaken as per the annual Work Plan.	100%
		c	Seek approval from Council to include a funding stream through the ECO Fund process to support rabbit management	1
		d	Allocate Council approved funding to eligible and successful ECO Fund applications by 30 June 2026.	100%
4	Review rabbit management programme	a	Review rabbit management programme (including associated community rabbit programme) to determine effectiveness and identify improvements by 30 February 2026	1 report
		b	Findings of rabbit management review to be presented to Council by 30 June 2026.	1

5.2 Gorse and broom

Objective: Implement sustained control of gorse and broom to ensure land that is **free** of gorse or broom or **being cleared of** gorse or broom does not become infested, to prevent adverse effects on production values and economic well-being.

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Undertake inspections.	a	Develop an annual Work Plan for gorse and broom inspections in Otago, prior to July 2025.	1
		b	% of known sites inspections, as described in the annual Work Plan.	100%

2	Facilitate control.	a	In any monitored site, where gorse and/or broom control is determined to be required, appropriate actions are undertaken to facilitate control to the required level for gorse and/or broom in Otago.	100%
3	Remote sensing.	a	Undertake an investigation into the use of remote sensing for gorse and broom with a view to create efficiencies within the programme by 30 June 2026.	1

5.3 Russell Lupin

Objective: Implement sustained control of the extent of Russell lupin and wild Russell lupin within specified distances from waterways and property boundaries to preclude establishment of wild Russell lupin and to prevent adverse effects on environmental values.

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Undertake monitoring.	a	Develop an annual Work Plan for Russell lupin monitoring in Otago, prior to July 2025.	1
		b	% of known sites monitored, as described in the annual Work Plan.	100%
2	Facilitate control.	a	In any site, where Russell lupin control is determined to be required, appropriate actions are undertaken to facilitate control to the required level for Russell lupins in Otago.	100%

5.4 Ragwort & Nodding Thistle

Objective: Implement sustained control of nodding thistle and ragwort on rural-zoned land within specified distances of property boundaries throughout the Otago region (Good Neighbour Rules; 'GNR') to prevent their spread to minimise adverse effects on production values and economic well-being.

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Respond to enquiries.	a	Respond to GNR enquiries around ragwort and nodding thistle within 10 working days.	100%

5.5 Biocontrol

Objective: Implement sustained control of nodding thistle and ragwort on rural-zoned land within specified distances of property boundaries throughout the Otago region (Good Neighbour Rules; 'GNR') to prevent their spread to minimise adverse effects on production values and economic well-being.

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Implement biocontrol.	a	Develop an annual Work Plan for biocontrol activities in Otago, prior to July 2025.	1

		b	Implement biocontrol in approved sites as described in annual Work Plan.	100%
		c	Provide an annual summary of biocontrol activities undertaken for control of pest plant species, in Otago.	1

6. Site-Led Pest Programme

6.1 Otago Peninsula | West Harbour & Mount Cargill | Quarantine & Goat Islands

Objective: Otago Regional Council will take a lead role in supporting community groups and agencies in bringing about the desired levels of environmental protection to these sites [Otago Peninsula (9,000 ha), West Harbour & Mt Cargill (12,500 ha) and Quarantine & Goat Islands].

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Prepare a plan.	a	Develop an annual Work Plan for site-led programmes, prior to July 2025.	1
2	Support the plan.	a	% stated activities in the Work Plan that were successfully supported by ORC.	100%

6.2 Lagarosiphon

Objective: To support LINZ in controlling lagarosiphon in the region's rivers and lakes by:

- Preventing its establishment in Lake Wakatipu and other regional water bodies
- Progressively reducing its spread in Lake Wanaka and the Kawarau River
- Undertaking sustained control in Lake Dunstan

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Facilitate monitoring and control.	a	Support LINZ in the management and control of lagarosiphon by ensuring that (contingent upon funding approval through the annual planning process) disbursements are made in accordance with the provisions outlined in the approved funding agreement.	100%
2	Raise awareness.	a	% of communication, education, and awareness initiatives for lagarosiphon through the 'Check, Clean Dry' Program completed, as described in the annual Work Plan.	100%

7. Monitoring & Surveillance

7.1 Freshwater

Objective:

To raise public awareness and identify and detect the presence of priority freshwater pest species by:

- Conducting targeted surveillance around the Otago region
- Ensuring the Freshwater Monitoring and Surveillance Plan remains current and effective by incorporating updated methods and target species
- Engagement with corbicula response at national level

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Undertake monitoring and surveillance of freshwater pests.	a	Update the Freshwater Monitoring and Surveillance Plan to include appropriate methods and include relevant freshwater pest species by 1 October 2025	1
		b	Undertake required monitoring of priority water bodies identified in the updated Freshwater Monitoring and Surveillance Plan to determine the presence of lagarosiphon and other freshwater pest species by 30 June 2026.	100%
2	Raise awareness.	a	% of communication, education, and awareness initiatives for freshwater pests through the 'Check, Clean Dry' Program completed, as described in the annual Work Plan.	100%
3	Sector engagement	a	Engage with corbicula and other responses through attendance of national level and cross regional level meeting attendance	100%

7.2 Marine

Objective:

To raise public awareness and identify and manage the presence of priority marine pest species by

- Developing a Marine Monitoring and Surveillance Plan for Otago
- Eradicate the Mediterranean Fanworm from Otago harbour
- Engagement with the sector on pathways management

Deliverable		KPI		Target
1	Undertake monitoring and surveillance of marine pests.	a	Co-development of a Marine Monitoring and Surveillance Plan with tangata whenua by 31 December 2025	1

		b	Deliver an incursion response plan to aim for eradication of the Mediterranean Fanworm by 30 June 2026	1
2	Raise awareness.	a	% of communication, education, and awareness initiatives for marine pests through the 'Protect your Paradise' Program completed, as described in the annual Work Plan.	100%
3	Sector engagement	a	Engage with the development of a sector position to pathways management through attendance of national and cross regional level meetings	100%

8. Glossary

For the purposes of this operational plan, the following definitions are provided. Further definitions can be found in the RPMP and the ORC Biosecurity Compliance and Enforcement Policy.

Active: A site currently being managed through a compliance pathway.

Annual Work Plan: A detailed description of how selected pests will be targeted to achieve the objectives of the RPMP.

Assessment: An inspection or monitoring visit.

Boundary: A line in a geographical space the delineates the surface extent between two (or more) adjoining land parcels.

Compliant: When a rule in the RPMP is adhered to.

Default Action: Work undertaken by the management agency to carry out pest control when a 'Notice of Direction' or 'Compliance Order' has not been complied with by an occupier, under section 128 of the BSA. The management agency can then recover costs and expenses reasonably incurred under section 129 of the BSA.

Known Site: A location that has a historical or current record of the pest being present. For ease of monitoring, a known site can include a buffer radius of up to 50 metres.

Inspection: A site visit (normally defined by a property) to determine compliance to RPMP rules undertaken by an authorised person as defined under the Biosecurity Act 1993.

Landowner: The same meaning as occupier in the Biosecurity Act 1993.

Land Parcel: A unique area of land, identified by the cadastral survey plan showing the legal boundaries, location, dimensions and area, along with the unique legal description (appellation).

Location: A geographical point on the surface of the earth. This will typically be identified by the GPS co-ordinates of northing and easting. For New Zealand, most common projections are the New Zealand Traverse Mercator or World Geodetic 1984).

Management Agency: The same meaning as in the Biosecurity Act 1993, specifically "*means the body specified as the management agency in a pest management plan or a pathway management plan*". For the purposes of the RPMP and Operational Plan, Otago Regional Council is the management agency for pests to be controlled in the Otago region.

Management Plan: A landowner/occupier agreement to manage selected pests as explained in the respective monitoring plan.

Modified McLean Scale: A scale that assesses rabbit population levels (see RPMP, Appendix 2).

Monitoring: Work undertaken to determine the prevalence and/or trend of a pest. This will normally be in-person visit to a location but can use remote sensing tools. Monitoring differs from inspection in that no subsequent enforcement is undertaken.

Notice of Direction (NOD): Actions required under a notice issued pursuant to section 122 of the Biosecurity Act 1993. A NOD can require a person to take action to address pest plant or animal problems or to comply with a rule in an RPMP.

Occupier: see 'Landowner'.

Non-Compliance: Any breach in a RPMP rule, upon a formal inspection. Non-compliance is liable for enforceable under the provisions of the BSA. For clarification, a breach of a RPMP rule does not have to be widespread across a property and may relate to a single location (or a defined area) within a property. Due to the potential of spread, the whole property is deemed non-compliant even if the infestation is localised.

Operational Plan: A plan prepared by the Management Agency under Section 100B of the Act.

Pest: The same meaning as in the Biosecurity Act 1993: “an organism specified as a pest in a pest management plan.”

Property: For the purposes of this plan, a property is an extent of land that is either [1] under unique ownership (whether individual, joint, partnership or corporate) or [2] is managed as a single operational entity. A property can be made up of one or more adjoining land parcels (see land parcel).

Surveillance: Work undertaken to determine the status (presence and extent) of pest species. This can be in-person or, increasingly, use remote sensing tools.

Surveillance Plan: Describes the approaches used to determine the presence, or extent, of pest species. A surveillance plan may cover a number of pest species.

Surrounding Area: A wider area surrounding a known site. This is variable depending on context of the pest but, at a minimum, includes all adjoining properties to the property with the pest infestation. A property is considered adjoining even if it is separated by a road, paper road, waterway or easement. A designated surrounding area does not prevent pest assessments from being carried out in non-surrounding areas.

Water Body: Fresh water in a river, lake, stream, pond, wetland, or aquifer, or any part thereof, that is not located within the coastal marine area.

Wilding Conifer: Wilding conifers are any introduced conifer tree, including (but not limited to) any of the species listed in Table 3 of the RPMP.

Zero Level / Zero Density: The pest is not detectable in an area; however the pest may continue to appear afterwards due to plant seed sources or animal migration from an unmanaged area.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Timeframes associated with Biosecurity Inspections

Compliance Type	Plants	Rabbits
Work Request	Three months; except six weeks for Old Man's Beard between Oct-Feb.	May-Dec: six months; Jan-Apr: three months
Notice of Direction	Three months; except six weeks for Old Man's Beard between Oct-Feb.	One year
<p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Where suitable, poisoning for rabbits is best in winter, hence the one-year timeframe for Notices of Direction ensures there is at least one winter to undertake control before re-inspection.2. Timeframes are based on the date the letter was sent, not when the inspection was undertaken.3. Re-inspections occur within a three-week period after the timeframe expires.		