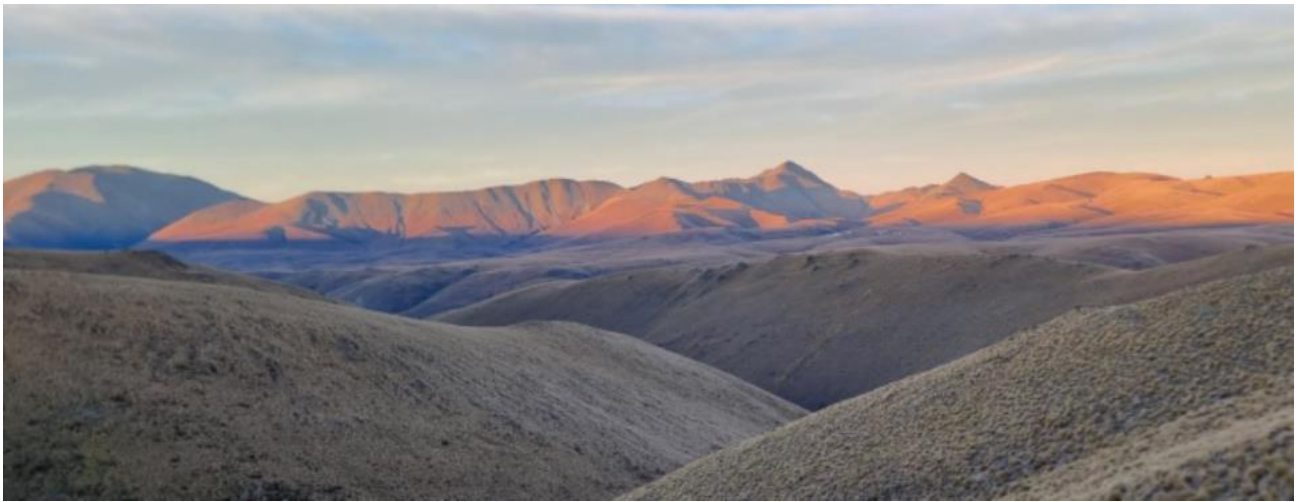


Biosecurity Operational Plan 2026-2027



Implementing the Otago Regional Pest Management Plan 2019-2029

Version 2

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Biosecurity Operational Plan 2026 - 2027

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Version Control

Version #	Date	Event/Changes made	Author
1	29 April 2026		M Ewans
2	23 June 2026	Amendment to page 10; s7.2 Marine to include stakeholders.	M Ewans

Cover Photo

Central Otago Landscape (Photo Credit: Gary Smith)

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 2026-2027*) 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 2026 through to 30 June 2027. For context, it is important that 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 centers 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	Confirm incursion		Incursion response commences within 24 hours of a suspected exclusion pest sighting.	100%
2	Undertake incursion response.		Incursion response plans ¹ are 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 rapid response		Rapid response activities commence within 24 hours of a suspected eradication pest sighting.	100%
2	Progress toward eradication		Surveillance and control (where required) is undertaken at known rookeries.	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 rapid response.		Rapid response activities that commence within 24 hours of a suspected eradication pest sighting.	100%
2	Progress toward eradication		Number of active sites to be monitored and moved toward eradication.	3

² Response includes any form of classification and field visit

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.	% of actions from the regional strategy commenced within specified due timeframes.	100%
2	Advocate for regional wilding conifer support.	Advocate for fair contributions from government and those responsible for the source of the wildings, as opportunities allow.	100%
3	Collaborate with and participate in the national wilding conifer programme.	% of Operational Advisory Group meetings attended.	100%
4	Meet agreement requirements	% of requirements of MPI funding agreement fulfilled.	100%
5	Support community contributions to the wilding conifer programme.	Support community and voluntary efforts to control wilding pines, as funding allows.	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	Advance progressive containment programme	Number of active sites monitored ¹ and maintained to progressive containment standards.	20
2	Delimit progressive containment area	Surveillance and monitoring completed in buffer sites, to ensure successful containment.	20

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.

¹ There are no landoccupier rules for African Love Grass, and so no inspections are undertaken. Active sites are monitored, and surveillance is undertaken in the surrounds. Control is ORC managed and funded.

Deliverable		KPI	Target
1	Advance progressive containment area	Inspections completed within active sites to determine compliance.	200
2	Delimit progressive containment area.	Inspections completed in buffer sites, to ensure successful containment.	100

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	Advance progressive containment programme	Inspections completed within priority areas.	100
2	Delimit progressive containment area	Inspections completed in buffer sites to ensure successful containment.	20

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	Advance progressive containment programme	Number of active spartina project areas monitored and maintained to progressive containment standards.	3
2	Delimit progressive containment area	Number of additional locations subject to surveillance for spartina.	1

4.6 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	Progress toward progressive containment	Inspections completed within active sites to determine compliance.	160

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	Establish a Rabbit Working Group.	Establish a Rabbit Working Group to strengthen pest management outcomes for the sustained control of feral rabbits. The working group will focus on practical delivery, partnerships and community, and landoccupier collaboration.	1
2	Compliance programme for sustained rabbit management	Inspections completed within active sites to determine compliance.	600
3	Community rabbit programme.	Number of project areas actively managed through a Community Rabbit Programme.	9

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 surveillance in New Gorse & Broom Free Area	Hectares of New Gorse and Broom Free Area subject to surveillance for the detection of gorse and broom.	438,779
2	Undertake inspections in New Gorse and Broom Free Area	Inspections completed where gorse or broom is detected through surveillance, to determine compliance.	250
3	Undertake inspections to ensure compliance with Good Neighbour Rules	Inspections completed to support compliance with Good Neighbour Rules.	80%

5.3 Wild 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
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1	Undertake monitoring.	Inspections completed in active sites to determine compliance.	20
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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.		GNR enquiries around ragwort and nodding thistle are responded to within 10 working days.	100%

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	Support successful outcomes for Site Led Programmes	Number of sites actively managed through a Site Led Programme.	2

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.	LINZ is supported in delivery of the agreed management plan, through funding in accordance with the approved funding agreement.	100%
2	Raise awareness.	Annual communication, education, and awareness initiatives for lagarosiphon through the 'Check, Clean Dry' Program completed	100%
3	Identify opportunities for improvement	Assess opportunities for eradication or a step-change intervention for lagarosiphon, including appropriate funding options and delivery models.	1 (scoping document)

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	Monitor high priority waterbodies	Category 'High' waterbodies will be subject to onshore monitoring	20
2	Monitor medium priority waterbodies	# of Category 'Medium' waterbodies will be subject to onshore monitoring	10
3	Sector engagement	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.	Complete co-development of a Marine Monitoring and Surveillance Plan with tangata whenua and stakeholders.	1
2	Raise awareness.	Communication, education, and awareness initiatives through the 'Protect your Paradise' Program completed.	100%
3	Sector engagement	Attendance of national and cross regional level meetings undertaken for the development of a sector position for pathways management.	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

1. Appendix 1: Timeframes associated with Biosecurity Inspections

Compliance Type	
Work Request <i>Pest Plants</i>	Minimum of six weeks, unless there is a significant biosecurity risk.
Work Request <i>Rabbits</i>	Minimum of two months, up to twelve months (dependent on practical control timeframes).
Notice of Direction <i>Pest Plants</i>	Minimum of six weeks, unless there is a significant biosecurity risk.
Notice of Direction <i>Rabbits</i>	Minimum of two months, up to twelve months (dependent on practical control timeframes).
Notes: 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.	