

2020 General Election Platform

BIOSECURITY AND PEST MANAGEMENT



Biosecurity

New Zealand's isolation and lack of land borders provides us with greater control over what can enter our shores than is afforded many other countries. This was clearly a positive factor in managing the human health risks of COVID-19.

New Zealand has therefore remained free of many serious pest animals and pest plants (weeds) and diseases that have decimated other countries.

The cost to farmers, growers, and the nation of seeking to eradicate those pests and diseases that breach our borders is significant but not as significant as the cost of living with them.

In 2012, it was calculated that if New Zealand suffered a major Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak, such as that which struck Europe in 2001, the cost to New Zealand would be over \$16 billion and reduce New Zealand's GDP by almost 8 per cent.

The cost of eradicating the relatively minor (compared to Foot and Mouth and a range of much more serious diseases) cattle disease *Mycoplasma Bovis* will be in the order of \$900 million over 10 years. The costs of living with *Mycoplasma Bovis* would be much greater. Significant lessons have been learned by MPI and Industry from this and other recent biosecurity responses. It is vital that the lessons are permanently captured in the upcoming review of Biosecurity Act and in MPI/ Biosecurity New Zealand's operational procedures.

A robust biosecurity system is essential to ensuring the benefits that arise from our geographic isolation are maintained.

The risks of a serious biosecurity incursion to New Zealand has increased significantly in recent years. The risk profile has been changing over recent years and has altered dramatically because of COVID-19. The volume of mail parcels entering New Zealand has been growing much faster than other risk pathways. Air passenger arrivals and cruise ship passengers had also been increasing at a great rate prior to COVID-19. Clearly the risks associated with air passengers and cruise ships have dramatically reduced. This enables a shift in emphasis to other pathways and a close monitoring of the effect of the worldwide pandemic on the movement of goods into New Zealand.

It is vital that MPI's medium to long term capacity and capability to effectively manage New Zealand's biosecurity threats is maintained as the border movements change because of COVID-19. Biosecurity requirements must be strictly enforced and breaches subject to strong penalties.

To protect New Zealand from unwanted pests and diseases it is crucial that New Zealand has strong science and risk-based biosecurity rules that are adhered to. These rules need to be complemented by rigorous screening, inspection and testing regimes before arrival or at the border.

Federated Farmers advocates for:

- Federated Farmers encourages all political parties to commit to ensuring that Government allocates the resources needed to develop, maintain and enforce a world class biosecurity system, including MPI's medium and long term biosecurity capacity and capability is maintained post COVID-19.



RESPONSES TO BIOSECURITY INCURSIONS

Every year, our biosecurity system stops many potential incursions, however occasionally a pest or disease gets through.

There is a crucial window of opportunity that allows for the eradication of a pest or disease before it establishes. Swift eradication, while costly in the short to medium term, avoids the substantial costs of long-term pest management. Experience with recent incursions strongly suggests more resources are required to achieve this.

Federated Farmers supports the strengthening of the Government Industry Agreement (GIA) framework as a valuable mechanism for government and industry to work together to better prepare for incursions and respond more effectively when they occur.

To date, 24 primary sector organisations have signed the GIA deed with MPI covering the majority of the primary sector. Operational Agreements are key mechanisms by which GIA sector organisations and MPI can agree on how they will jointly prepare for biosecurity incursions and respond to pest and diseases should they arrive and agree on funding mechanisms. Currently there are nine Operational Agreements covering Fruit Fly, Brown Marmorated Stink Bug, *Mycoplasma bovis* and the potatoes, tomatoes, onions, equine, forestry owners and kiwifruit sectors. An Operational Agreement for Foot and Mouth Disease is close to completion. It is important that this Operational Agreement is finalised including agreement on Government/Industry cost shares in accordance with the MPI/Livestock sectors' funding matrix agreed to on 1 June 2017.

Federated Farmers advocates for:

- Federated Farmers encourages all political parties to commit to Government to maintain and improve its ability respond to biosecurity incursions, to be committed to GIA partnership and to ensure the lessons learned from the *Mycoplasma bovis* and over responses are engrained in changes to the Biosecurity Act and in MPI's operational procedures.

PEST MANAGEMENT

New Zealand has benefited greatly from the introduction of exotic species like cattle, sheep and valuable crops. However, a number of the 25,000 exotic plant, 35 bird and 32 mammal species already established threaten New Zealand's conservation, biodiversity, and primary sector.

Major consequences arise for farmers, conservation and biodiversity when these exotic species become established. Research by the Royal Society in 2014 identified the economic cost to New Zealand from vertebrate pests to be about 2% of GDP every year. For pastoral weeds, the economic cost to New Zealand in lost production and control costs is \$1.2 billion per annum. Animal pests also impose significant costs. In addition, a significant amount of public and private resources are invested in controlling a number of these pests.

The governments' significant boost in funding for controlling wilding conifers (\$100 million) and wallabies (\$27 million) and ongoing funding for possum control outlined in Budget 2020 was a very positive step forward in reducing the environmental and economic costs of these pests. An ongoing commitment to existing Pest Management programmes such as Bovine TB, Velvetleaf and Kauri Dieback is also required.

A greater recognition of the potential for new technologies such as gene editing to reduce to costs of controlling plant and animal pests is required.

Federated Farmers advocates for:

- continued support for initiatives to reduce the impacts of established weeds and pest animals,
- ensure these initiatives have sufficient ongoing resources,
- support the availability of the full range of tools to achieve reduced impacts at cost.