

Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032

Pūronga ā-Tau mō te Mahere Mahi  
**Operational Plan Annual Report 2025/26**

Prepared by Biosecurity Section, Integrated Catchment Management

# Rārangi kaupapa

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# He tīmatanga kōrero

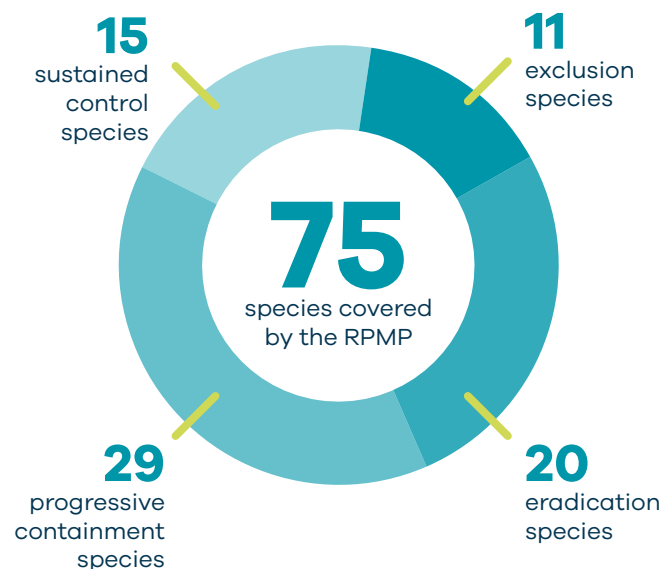
## Introduction

This annual report summarises all operational work completed, and progress made, against the objectives of the Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032 (RPMP) for the 2025/26 financial year (1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026).

It also highlights non-regulatory work undertaken by Waikato Regional Council (the council) aligned with the key regional priorities set out in the Waikato Biosecurity Strategy 2022-2032.

An annual report is a statutory requirement under section 100B(2)(a) of the Biosecurity Act 1993. Financial information is provided in summary form only.

# Key stats 2025/26



**0** new exclusion sites found

**48** pest plant sites declared eradicated after 10 consecutive years of zero density

**83%** of programmes are on track

## Pest plants



**31,328km**

covered during pest plant control and surveillance



**4240**

properties inspected for RPMP pest plants



**973km**

of aerial surveillance along the west coast

## Summer advocacy



**1198**

vessel hull inspections for unwanted marine organisms

**15**

boats race events attended

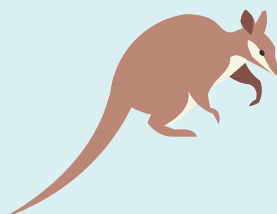
**100boats**

washed at boat ramps

**3789people**

engaged with at boat ramps

## Wallabies (dama/parma)



**24,466ha**

wallaby detector dog surveillance

**32**

'out of containment' sighting reports of wallaby

**3003ha**

drone surveillance for wallabies

## Possums



**617ha**

Hamilton Halo possum and rat control

**>132,000ha**

of Priority Possum Control

## Goats



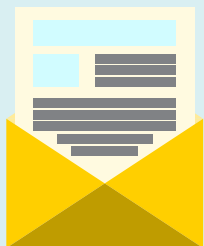
**1343.5 hours**

of goat control on Mt Pirongia and buffer

**1247**

goats culled

## Enforcement



**1** notice of direction

**0** notice of intention to act on default

**1** formal warning

**4** programme letters

**155** non-programme letters

## Incidents and requests for service



**436** incidents received and assessed

**446** requests for service

## Web stats



**>20,000**  
people visited biosecurity  
on council website

**68%**  
average  
engagement rate

**>28,000**  
biosecurity  
webpage views

**2.34**  
minutes average  
time spent

# Financial summary

Revised budget:

## \$14.74m

Actual expenditure:

## \$14.04m

| Expenditure  | Revised budget (\$) | Actual expenditure (\$) | Difference (\$) |
|--------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Pest plants  | 6,814,090           | 6,366,234               | 447,855         |
| Pest animals | 7,924,232           | 7,674,229               | 250,003         |
| Totals       | 14,738,321          | 14,040,463              | 697,858         |

**Table 1: Summary of end of year financial positions**

The revised budget for the biosecurity programme in 2025/26 was \$14.74 million, with actual expenditure of \$14.04 million, resulting in an overall underspend of \$697,858 (4.7 per cent).

The pest plant programme was underspent by \$447,855, while the pest animal programme was underspent by \$250,003.

The key factors contributing to the biosecurity programme's variance were:

- reduced expenditure on wilding conifer control because of limited contractor availability, with resources redirected to storm response and recovery work on the Coromandel Peninsula
- receipt of unbudgeted MPI funding for kauri protection, which was prioritised ahead of council funding as it could not be carried forward
- delays to kauri protection fencing projects due to staffing changes, shifting landowner priorities and contractor availability due to weather damage repair and recovery activities
- delays in delivering the biosecurity wash station at Lake Maraetai
- reduced feral goat control expenditure following changes to Department of Conservation priorities in the southern Coromandel
- extreme weather events affecting staff and contractor site access and delaying field operations
- extended staff vacancies and recruitment constraints reducing project management capacity during the year
- changes to project partner milestones, resulting in some expenditure being deferred to future years.

## External funding

Additional funding was received in 2025/26 from a range of external partners, supporting both regional and nationally significant biosecurity programmes and initiatives. These are summarised below.

### Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI):

- Kauri protection activities, including education resources, national research initiatives, disease vector control, and mitigation work in areas with recently detected infection.
- Wilding conifer control programme.
- Wallaby management in the Waikato region through the Tipu Mātoro Wallaby Eradication Programme (with funding administered by Toi Moana Bay of Plenty Regional Council).
- Two nationally focused roles supporting the invasive freshwater clam (Corbicula) programme.
- Exotic caulerpa advocacy and engagement activities.
- White bryony and Manchurian wild rice surveillance and control through the National Interest Pest Responses (NIPR) programme.

### Department of Conservation (DOC)

- Management of Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP) pest plants and animals on conservation land.

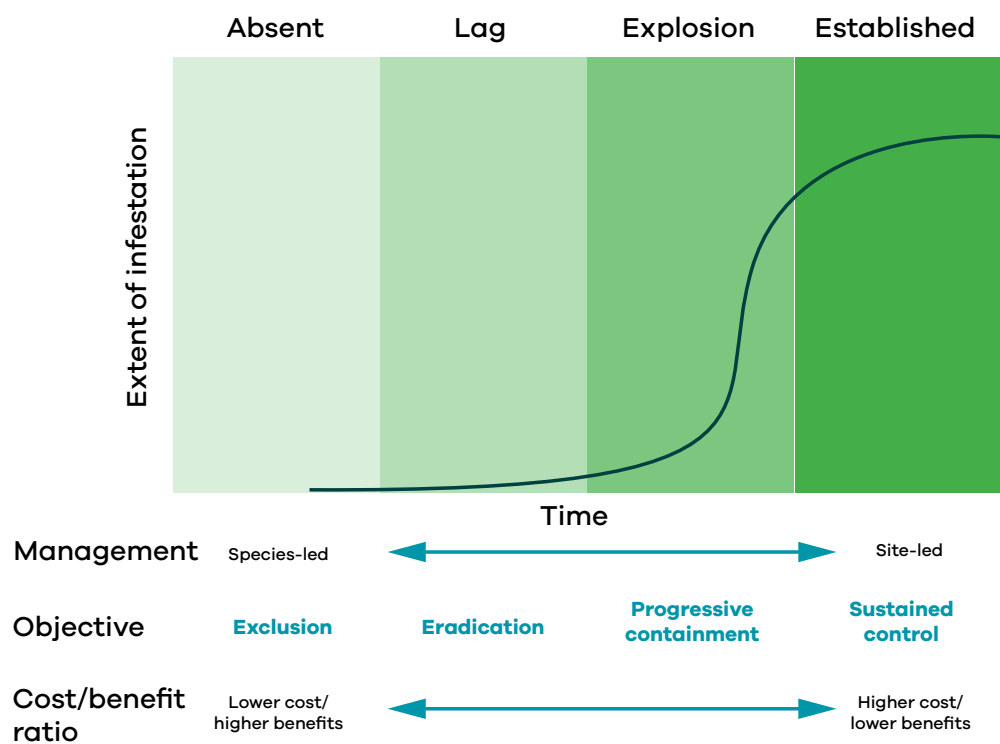
### Waikato River Authority (WRA)

- Contribution to yellow flag iris control around Lake Waikare and on Waikato River islands.

# RPMP programmes

Pests are managed within five programmes depending on their effects, distribution, density, control methods available and cost:

- Exclusion programme
- Eradication programme
- Progressive containment programme
- Sustained control programme
- Site-led pest management programmes



The council achieves practical pest management objectives using the following approaches.

## Service delivery

This is pest control that the council funds and undertakes, for example, for high threat, low incidence pest plants in a ‘pest-led’ management approach, or to protect specific values on private land in the region under a ‘site-led’ approach. The council may also provide control tools, including the sourcing and distribution of biological control agents.

## Council inspection – monitoring/ surveillance

The council undertakes property inspections to determine where pests are present and make sure RPMP rules are being adhered to. Monitoring is also undertaken to confirm the need for pest control (for example, pest animal trend monitoring) and that control targets have been achieved. Surveillance activities allow for new pest incursions to be promptly detected and appropriate responses initiated.

## Requirement to act

The RPMP has a set of rules that require occupiers or other persons to act, for example, the requirement to report a pest or undertake pest control, prepare and submit a biosecurity management plan, or to not spread a pest. Every effort is made to encourage and assist occupiers to achieve voluntary compliance. Appropriate enforcement action is taken against occupiers who fail to comply.

## Advocacy and education

The council provides practical biosecurity advice, education and awareness through its website (waikatoregion.govt.nz), factsheets, field days and its 24-hour freephone number (0800 800 401). The council also promotes industry biosecurity requirements and best practice and facilitates and commissions research on biosecurity issues.

# Working together - helping landowners and occupiers to 'do the right thing'

While the *Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan* (RPMP) is a statutory document made under the Biosecurity Act, with legally enforceable rules, Waikato Regional Council prioritises education and support over enforcement where practical.

The RPMP identifies pest plants and animals that pose a risk to our region and outlines the responsibilities of landowners and occupiers for managing them. This includes reporting pests, preventing spread, and controlling specific pest species.

Failure to comply with RPMP rules can result in enforcement action, including formal notices, council undertaking the work and recovering costs, or prosecution where appropriate.

However, the council applies a graduated approach to compliance, so its Biosecurity Team is available to provide expert advice and guidance to help landowners understand their responsibilities and take appropriate action.

The team responds to high volumes of enquiries about pests in the RPMP, as well as other weeds and introduced animal species. This year, 882 incidents and requests for service were received and responded to.

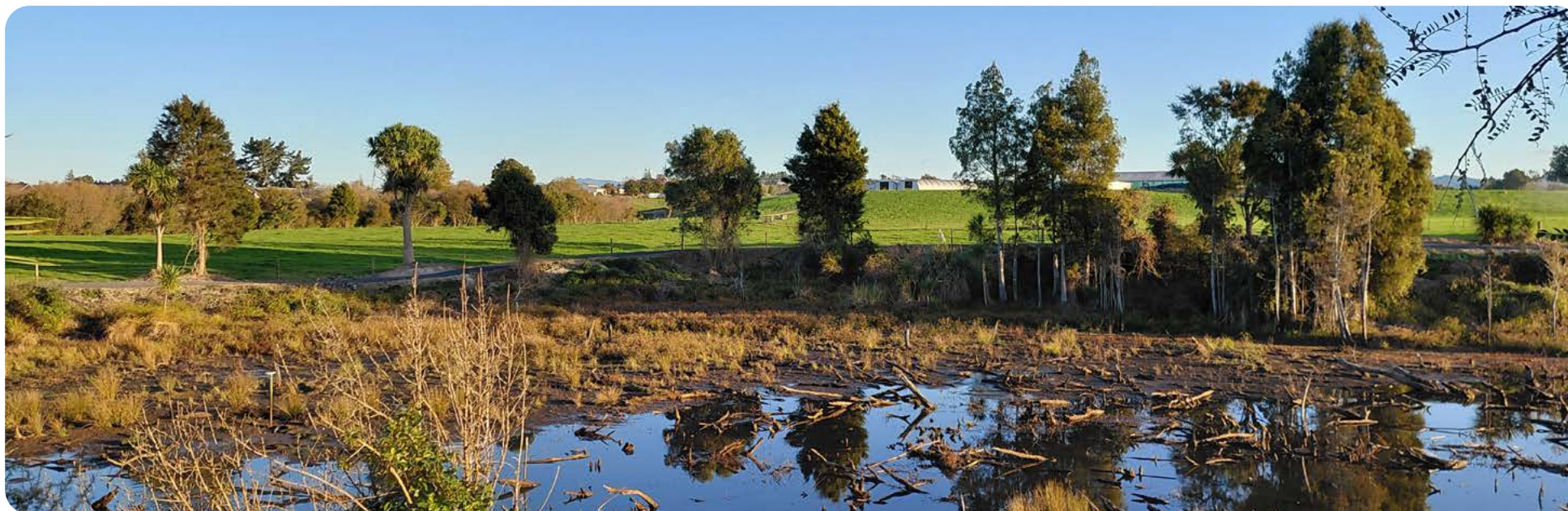
The team also responds to complaints. For example, where Good Neighbour Rules apply, the council will work with the neighbouring landowners to encourage effective pest control across property boundaries.

## Case study

In addition to direct support, the council's biosecurity webpages attract significant online traffic and provide accessible information and links to further resources.

Our biosecurity staff also engage with communities through school and club visits, field days and public events, helping to raise awareness and promote best practice biosecurity actions and pest management.

This educational and supportive approach helps landowners and occupiers to understand and meet their obligations, encourages positive behaviour change, and contributes to higher levels of compliance and improved biosecurity outcomes across the region.

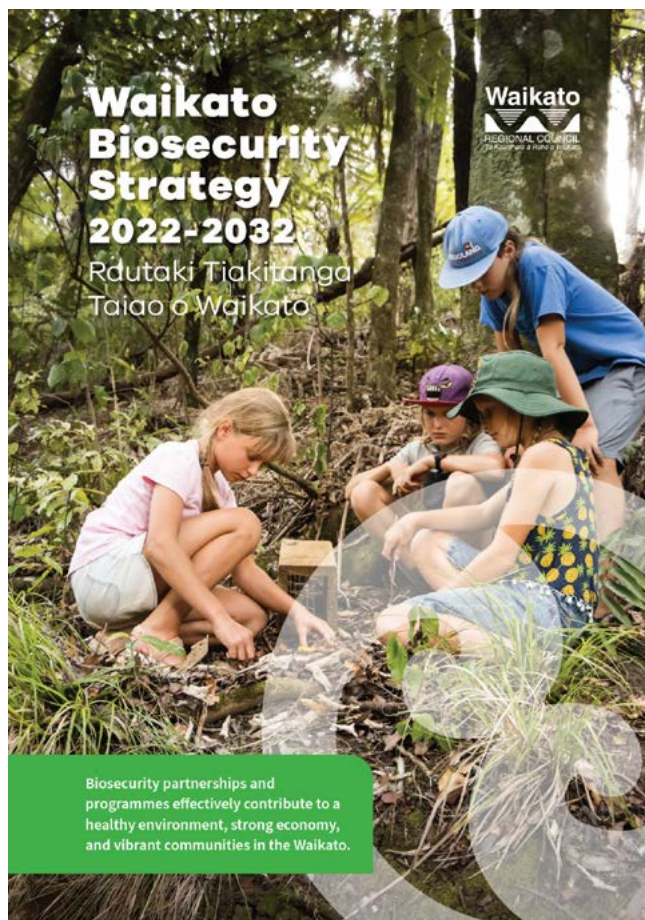
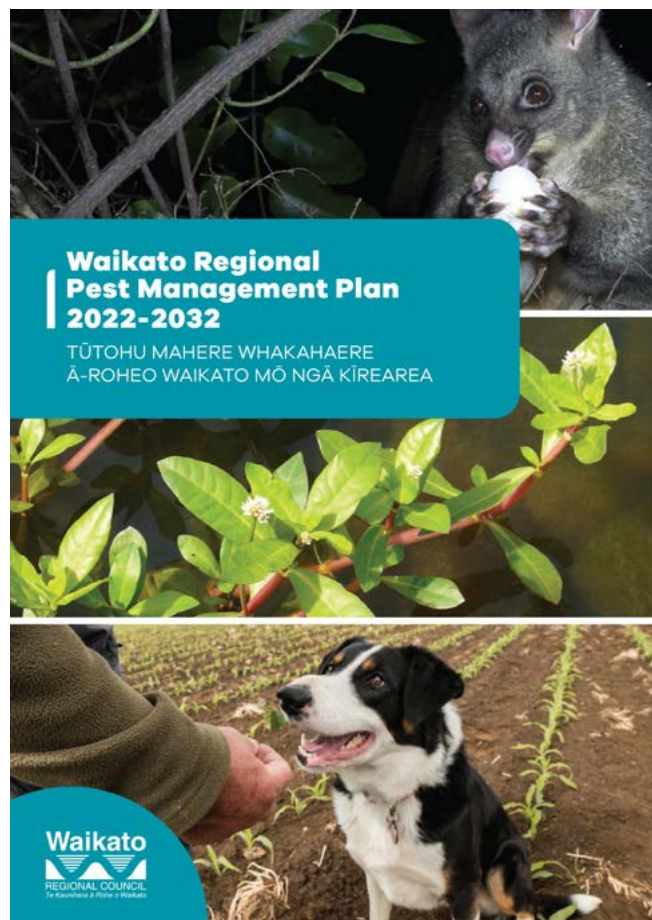


# Report format

This annual report should be read in conjunction with the *Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032*, the *2022/2032 RPMP Operational Plan* and the *Waikato Biosecurity Strategy 2022-2032*.

The implementation of the RPMP is undertaken by staff in the council's pest plant and pest animal biosecurity teams and a range of pre-approved contractors.

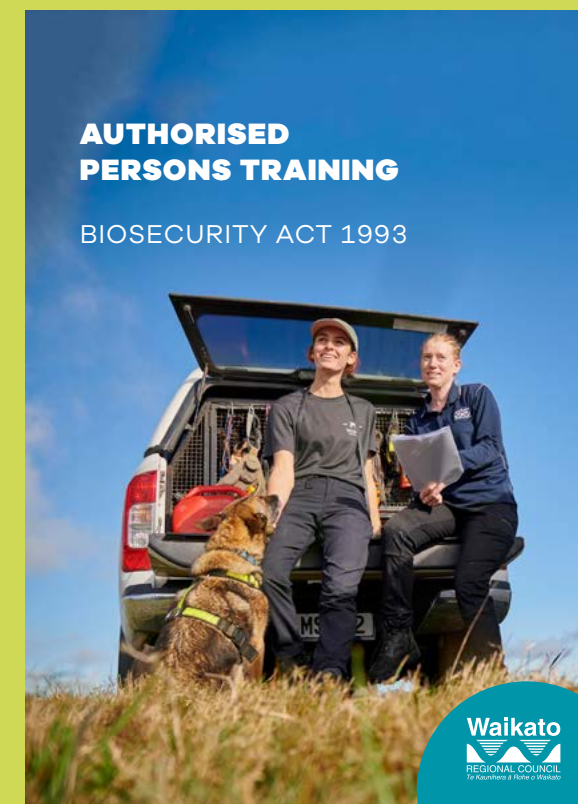
This report deals primarily with pest management projects under the RPMP pest management programmes. The objective(s) and outcome(s) for each management programme, and the status and results against key performance indicators in the Operational Plan for each species, is included in this annual report.



## A framework for working well under the Biosecurity Act

Over the last few years, Waikato Regional Council has led the way in aligning how all regional councils should operate when working under the Biosecurity Act 1993.

This has included the development and production of an Authorised Person's Training Manual and an e-learning training module for staff and contractors undertaking their functions, powers and duties lawfully under the Act.





# Part 1: Ngā whakamārama o te hōtaka whakahaere kīrearea Pest management programme reporting

This section provides an overview for each pest management programme, including the objective and outcome of each programme. It also includes the status ratings of the management of each pest species within the programmes as follows.

| Status                                                                              | Description                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <b>On track</b> – pest management programme is considered on-track to meet RPMP pest management programme objectives.                     |
|  | <b>At risk</b> – pest management programme is considered at risk of not meeting some of the RPMP pest management objectives. <sup>1</sup> |
|  | <b>More input required</b> – pest management programme did not meet any RPMP pest management objectives.                                  |

<sup>1</sup> Explanations for individual species status is provided under Part 3 'Species Pages'. Programmes may not meet their RPMP management objectives for a range of reasons including severe weather events that impact on a season's pest control operations by limiting site access and contractor availability

# Exclusion programme

The exclusion programme covers pests that the council has opted to be the lead agency, or partner, in managing.

Most of these pests are present outside of the Waikato region, or have recently been eradicated from it, and have the potential to establish here or expand their range and become a problem.

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Objective</b> | Over the duration of this plan, preclude the establishment of pests in the exclusion programme within the Waikato region to prevent adverse effects and impacts as defined in the RPMP. |
| <b>Outcome</b>   | No pests in the exclusion programme are established in the region.                                                                                                                      |

| Pest plant species       | Status | Known infestations within the region | Infestations discovered 2025/26 |
|--------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Broom corn millet        | ●      | 0                                    | 0                               |
| Chilean needle grass     | ●      | 0                                    | 0                               |
| Freshwater eel grass     | ●      | 2                                    | 0                               |
| Fringed water lily       | ●      | 0                                    | 0                               |
| Horsetail (field/common) | ●      | 2                                    | 0                               |
| Kudzu vine               | ●      | 0                                    | 0                               |
| Marshwort                | ●      | 2                                    | 0                               |

| Pest animals               | Status | Animals reported or confirmed |
|----------------------------|--------|-------------------------------|
| Wallaby:                   | ●      | 0                             |
| Bennett's wallaby          |        |                               |
| Brush-tailed rock wallaby  |        |                               |
| Parma wallaby <sup>2</sup> |        |                               |
| Swamp wallaby              |        |                               |

<sup>2</sup> Since the current RPMP became operative in 2022, it has been confirmed, via genetic testing that parma, in addition to dama wallaby are present amongst known populations of wallaby within the containment area which extends into the Waikato region.



Wallaby

# Priority pathways – stopping agricultural pest plants in their tracks!

Waikato Regional Council has commissioned a pilot Agricultural Weeds Pathway Project to assess how human activities could inadvertently introduce and spread high-risk agricultural pest plants into and within the Waikato region.

In a biosecurity context, a pathway is a route or mechanism via which harmful organisms (such as pest plants or animals) move from one location to another, either naturally or with human assistance. Through pathways, pests may move within farm, between farms or further to other parts of the country.

Pathways for agricultural pest plants like velvetleaf, broom corn millet, field horsetail and Chilean needle grass can include seeds or plant fragments hitching a ride on farming machinery and vehicles, in contaminated gravel, hay or animal feed, or on the hooves or coats of livestock. Identifying pathways is important to:

- understand how pests move
- prevent pest movement if possible
- target surveillance and monitoring efforts to detect pests early
- work to protect the values of our region.

The Agricultural Weeds Pathway Project considers new and emerging agricultural weeds that have the potential to threaten productivity, land values and biodiversity in the Waikato region. It draws on information from neighbouring regions, including Auckland, Bay of Plenty and Hawke's Bay, to better understand the pathways and vectors most likely to facilitate the movement of these weeds between and within regions.

This will help assess the risk of pest plants already present in neighbouring regions crossing into Waikato and identify opportunities to prevent their introduction and spread.

A report is expected to be completed in late 2026. The findings will inform the development of a non-statutory Pathway Management Strategy, which will identify and prioritise target interventions and build on existing programmes to minimise the risk of agricultural pest plant spread into the Waikato region from neighbouring regions.

## Case study



Field horsetail



Broom corn millet

## Shutting down velvetleaf pathways

Velvetleaf is one of world's worst cropping weeds. It has the potential to reduce the yields of crops such as maize, fodder beet and chicory by up to 70 per cent. Once established, velvetleaf is difficult to control – a single plant can produce up to 30,000 seeds that can survive for up to 50 years.

Infestations of velvetleaf in the Waikato region have been linked to the movement of infested maize crops and silage, agricultural machinery and stock that have eaten contaminated feed. Shutting down these pathways of spread are key to tackling this pest plant in the region.

In recognition of this, a Velvetleaf Outreach Coordinator has been employed since 2016. Initially funded by MPI, the position is now jointly funded by North Island regional councils. The coordinator works with the rural and arable sectors to advocate, educate and support the control and prevention of velvetleaf spread. A velvetleaf detector dog named Wink is also flown up from Invercargill several times a year to accompany pest plant officers and inspect crops in each region.

Eradicating velvetleaf is expensive. Velvetleaf is managed as part of the progressive containment management programme of the Waikato RPMP.



Wink, the velvetleaf detector dog.

## Biosecurity workshop - industry engagement, and training in tracing

In April 2026, Waikato Regional Council held a two-day biosecurity workshop on improving industry engagement and tracing the origins and pathways of weed and pest incursions in agricultural environments. The workshop featured presentations from council and industry experts and was attended by 21 biosecurity practitioners, agronomists and consultants from around New Zealand.

Day one looked at tracing techniques and enforcement under the Biosecurity Act, including a field trip to explore some real-world scenarios.

Day two focused on landowner and industry engagement to offer insights from those working on the ground and included a Q&A panel session with a dairy farmer and rural contractor.

The workshop fostered stronger relationships between council and industry, reinforcing a collaborative approach to managing biosecurity risks.

# Eradication programme

The eradication programme is used to manage pests that the council considers can be eradicated from the region over the period of the RPMP due to their low density and/or distribution.

The council has a lead role in the management of these pests through advocacy and education, inspection and service delivery. Comprehensive programmes of work are developed for all eradication pests. These programmes are high priority. Preventing eradication pests from becoming more widely established in the region will have huge benefits to the region's social, economic, cultural and environmental values.

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Objective</b> | Over the duration of the RPMP, reduce the level of infestation of eradication pests within the Waikato region to zero density to prevent adverse effects and impacts as identified in the RPMP. |
| <b>Outcome</b>   | All known or new pest infestations are controlled to zero density within the duration of this RPMP                                                                                              |

| Pest plants                                                 | Status | Number of operational sites                                                                                                                             | Area managed (ha) | Area of plant cover (m <sup>2</sup> ) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| African feathergrass                                        | ●      | 20                                                                                                                                                      | 340.8             | 217                                   |
| Cathedral bells                                             | ●      | 21                                                                                                                                                      | 66.6              | 16                                    |
| Chilean flame creeper                                       | ●      | 5                                                                                                                                                       | 23.4              | 533                                   |
| Evergreen buckthorn                                         | ●      | See evergreen buckthorn species page for a breakdown of results and <a href="#">Towards eradication of evergreen buckthorn from Whangamatā page 17.</a> |                   |                                       |
| Horse nettle                                                | ●      | 2                                                                                                                                                       | 40                | 4                                     |
| Horsetail (rough)                                           | ●      | 13                                                                                                                                                      | 11.8              | 71                                    |
| Knotweed (giant and Japanese/ Asiatic)                      | ●      | 26                                                                                                                                                      | 31                | 231                                   |
| Mile-a-minute                                               | ●      | 25                                                                                                                                                      | 13.8              | 272                                   |
| Nassella (fine stemmed needle grass/ Mexican feather grass) | ●      | 33                                                                                                                                                      | 6.7               | 15.4                                  |
| Nassella tussock                                            | ●      | 6                                                                                                                                                       | 15.5              | 562                                   |



Chilean flame creeper

| Pest plants                                  | Status                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Number of operational sites | Area managed (ha) | Area of plant cover (m <sup>2</sup> ) |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Noogoora bur                                 | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 13                          | 310.5             | 1,112.2                               |
| Purple loosestrife                           | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 5                           | 5.6               | 10                                    |
| <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>                 | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 4                           | 13.7              | 11                                    |
| Sagittaria/arrowhead                         | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 5                           | 1,270             | 14                                    |
| Senegal tea                                  | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 7                           | 172.8             | 562.7                                 |
| Spartina (common cordgrass/smooth cordgrass) | DOC is the lead management agency for most spartina sites in the Waikato region. It is working towards eradication of spartina in some sites (e.g. Kawhia and Aotea harbours) and continued surveillance and control in others (e.g. Coromandel harbours). The council contributes financially towards the programme. |                             |                   |                                       |
| Thistle (Variegated)                         | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 7                           | 1,664             | 91,000                                |
| Water poppy                                  | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 4                           | 9                 | 500                                   |

| Pest animals | Status | Confirmed rookeries | Number of active nest sites | Active nest sites controlled | Nest sites abandoned (due to weather events) |
|--------------|--------|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Rook         | ●      | 2                   | 2                           | 0                            | 1                                            |



Variegated thistle  
© mapuchemarc, iNaturalist

# Giant knotweed 'eradicated' from Waikato

Giant knotweed is officially considered eradicated from the Waikato region, marking a significant biosecurity success for Waikato Regional Council.

Giant knotweed is a fast-growing, hardy pest plant introduced to New Zealand as an ornamental species. It spreads through resilient underground stems, known as rhizomes, and is notoriously difficult to control once established.

The plant can form dense monocultures that displace native vegetation and damage infrastructure. Its rhizomes can penetrate floorboards and small cracks in concrete and, over time, undermine building foundations. In the United Kingdom, the presence of giant knotweed is known to negatively affect property values.

Although giant knotweed does not produce viable seed in New Zealand, it can readily establish new infestations from small stem or rhizome fragments, making containment and control challenging.

There were only two known sites of giant knotweed in the Waikato region: one in Waihi and the other in Waikino.

The sites, which were confirmed in 2011 following reports from the public, are associated with old rail corridors, but the origins of the infestations remain unknown.

Because of its low incidence and high invasive potential, giant knotweed is classified as an eradication pest under the Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP). Following confirmation of the infestations, council pest plant officers began control efforts using the specialist herbicide UniMaz® applied as a foliar spray over several seasons, with mixed results.

A recommendation from one of the council's pest plant contractors led to a trial of a 'cut and inject' technique, where herbicide was injected directly into individual stems. While labour intensive, the method proved to be highly effective.

Since that treatment, neither site has shown any regrowth for 10 consecutive years, and no further control work has been required. This sustained absence of giant knotweed means it can be officially considered eradicated from the Waikato region – and we are ready if any new infestations are ever found!



## Case study



# Towards eradication of evergreen buckthorn from Whangamatā

Waikato Regional Council is winning the fight against evergreen buckthorn in Whangamatā.

Evergreen buckthorn is a serious pest plant in New Zealand, particularly in coastal environments where it can compete with native vegetation and form dense stands if left unchecked. Introduced as a hardy ornamental species, evergreen buckthorn fortunately has a very limited distribution in the Waikato region. Because of its low incidence and high threat, it is classified as an eradication pest in our RPMP and is a priority for council surveillance and control.

The council first detected evergreen buckthorn in Whangamatā in 2021. Since then an area covering approximately 500 properties in the town has been surveyed every two years. Any evergreen buckthorn plants found are immediately controlled, and this has resulted in a steady reduction in the number of infestations over the past five years. In the first year, the amount of evergreen buckthorn found and removed made up three trailer loads. In 2025/26, during surveillance across all the properties, only three small evergreen buckthorn plants were found and controlled.

This marks significant progress. It also highlights the value of repeated, consistent, thorough surveillance and effective control. While ongoing surveillance and targeted communications is still required, we are in a strong position to eliminate any remaining evergreen buckthorn infestations from Whangamatā in the coming years.



In 2025/26, during surveillance across about 500 properties in Whangamatā, only three small evergreen buckthorn plants were found and controlled.

# Progressive containment programme

The progressive containment programme is used to manage pests that are well established, but which can be feasibly reduced in geographic distribution and thereby impacts, in all or part of the region.

It is appropriate for the council to manage some of the pests in the progressive containment programme (for example, giant gunnera, alligator weed and climbing spindleberry), rather than rely solely on voluntary action, because:

- successful containment of these species requires co-ordination of action at a regional scale
- the benefits of the control of many of these pests accrue to a wider community than those directly affected by the presence of the pests on their property.

For some pests in the progressive containment programme, control is the occupier's responsibility to control (for example, control of lantana and chocolate vine). Occupiers may also need to produce biosecurity management plans if planning subdivision or land development activities where pest plants like alligator weed are present. The council provides advice and information on the identification, impacts and, where appropriate, the control of the progressive containment pest species.

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Objective</b> | Over the duration of the plan, contain and where practicable progressively reduce the geographic distribution or extent of progressive containment pests within all or specific parts of the Waikato region to pre-2022 levels to reduce further adverse effects and impacts as identified in the RPMP. |
| <b>Outcome</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in extent and density of these pests.</li> <li>• Areas that are clear of these pests will remain so.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                      |

| Pest plants                                       | Status | Number of operational sites | Total area of operational sites (ha) | Pest plant cover (m <sup>2</sup> ) |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Alligator weed                                    | ●      | 220                         | 24,488                               | 26,929                             |
| Banana passionfruit (Taupō and Rotorua districts) | ●      | 7                           | 262                                  | 143                                |
| Boneseed                                          | ●      | 22                          | 1,339                                | 206                                |
| Climbing spindleberry                             | ●      | 224                         | 3,305                                | 3,276                              |
| Darwin's barberry                                 | ●      | 3                           | 2,857                                | 28                                 |



Darwin's Barberry

| Pest plants                                     | Status | Number of operational sites | Total area of operational sites (ha) | Pest plant cover (m²) |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Giant gunnera                                   | ●      | 6                           | 11                                   | 4                     |
| Golden dodder                                   | ●      | 29                          | 935                                  | 3,861                 |
| Mexican waterlily                               | ●      | 21                          | 50                                   | 7,820                 |
| Moth plant (Taupō and Rotorua districts)        | ●      | 1                           | 0                                    | 4.1                   |
| Old man's beard                                 | ●      | 94                          | 2,750                                | 3,077                 |
| Velvetleaf                                      | ●      | 92                          | 7,151.9                              | 227                   |
| Wild kiwifruit                                  | ●      | 12                          | 5.4                                  | 367                   |
| Woolly nightshade (Taupō and Rotorua districts) | ●      | 3                           | 309                                  | 1,723                 |
| Yellow flag iris                                | ●      | 102                         | 16,442.5                             | 8,375                 |

| Pest animals | Status | Public sightings reported | Total area of wallaby indicator dog and drone surveillance          | Direct control                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------|--------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dama wallaby | ●      | 32                        | 24,466ha of dog surveillance<br>3003 hectares of drone surveillance | >527 wallabies shot<br>(2 outside containment, >525 within the containment buffer)<br>2,901ha aerial control - Paeroa ranges<br>(contribution to DOC/WRC operation) |



Golden dodder

# Two decades of managing yellow flag iris at Lake Rotoroa – progress through partnership

Yellow flag iris has gone from being a major pest around Hamilton Lake (Lake Rotoroa) to a barely noticeable presence – demonstrating what long-term, sustained pest plant control can achieve.

Yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) is a semi-aquatic pest plant able to form dense stands along stream, river and wetland margins and through swampy ground. It is hardy and tolerant of a wide range of environmental conditions. Able to displace low-lying pasture and native vegetation and toxic to stock, it poses a risk to agricultural productivity and animal health, and biodiversity values. With its distinctive large yellow flowers, it is the subject of council control in parts of the region, with landowners also undertaking control to limit impacts on their farms.

Lake Rotoroa, the largest of three lakes within Hamilton city, has a surface area of about 54 hectares. It is an important recreational area, and habitat for native waterbirds and other wildlife.

In the early 2000s, infestations of yellow flag iris were extensive, forming dense stands around the lake's margins. Because of this, control efforts became a high priority for both Waikato Regional Council and Hamilton City Council. From the outset, both councils adopted a collaborative approach.

Regular surveys and mapping of infestations guided targeted removal and control operations. Manual removal, combined with selective herbicide application, proved very effective in reducing iris density. By coordinating timing and methods, the councils minimised regrowth and prevented new infestations from taking hold.

Year on year, these consistent efforts paid off, with infestations gradually brought under control. Today, only a handful of yellow flag iris plants are detected annually, with most swiftly removed before they can spread. Much of the lake's margin is now dominated by native plants like raupō, sedges and rushes that provide habitat for native waterfowl.

This outcome is not just a testament to effective weed management techniques, but also to the power of persistence, collaboration, and long-term planning. Most people visiting the lake today (including council staff) might not even recall the extent of the yellow flag iris problem there 22 years ago. It offers a clear example of how working together, with a shared vision, can deliver lasting environmental benefits.

## Case study



Photo: C.Lewis (Weedbusters)



Much of the lake's margin is now dominated by native plants like raupō, sedges and rushes.

## Targeted trio for containment in cooler climes

Banana passionfruit, moth plant and woolly nightshade are pest plants native to South America that thrive in warmer climates. While widespread in the northern and coastal parts of the region, they occur at low levels or are absent from cooler inland areas of the Taupō and Rotorua districts (in our region), where colder temperatures have helped to limit their spread.

For this reason, we have two different management programmes for these pest plants in the Waikato region. In areas where they are widespread, they are managed within the sustained control programme, with control supported by Good Neighbour rules to enable coordinated action between adjacent landowners and community groups. In Taupō and Rotorua, however, their low incidence means they are part of the progressive containment programme, which makes them a priority for council surveillance and control.

### Woolly nightshade

**Mangakino:** A significant new mature infestation was found at Lake Maraetai in 2025 during regular pest plant surveillance (on the ground and using a drone) of Mangakino. Contractors successfully controlled the infestation, and another survey was undertaken in 2026, with no new areas of infestation found. This gives us confidence that we know the extent of infestations present in the town area, and where to concentrate future surveillance and control efforts.



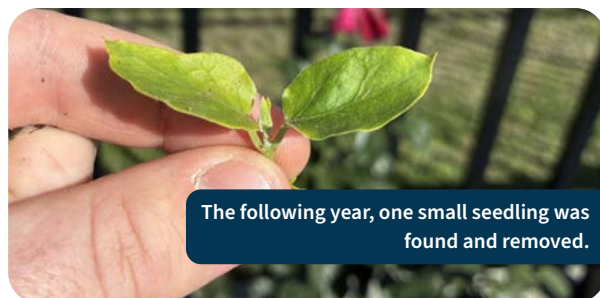
Woolly nightshade

**Taupō:** A member of the public reported one large woolly nightshade plant in Taupō in January 2025. Council staff removed the plant and bagged all berries. No seedlings were found at that time, and a follow-up site inspection in July 2025 found no plants; however, at the next inspection in February 2026, 10-15 woolly nightshade seedlings were found on a neighbouring property, near the original tree. All except one were hand-pulled. The one seedling was left to see if it would survive a Taupō winter – the stunted nature of most woolly nightshade plants found in Taupō suggests their growth is limited by frosts.

**Waiotapu:** A single woolly nightshade plant was found in Waiotapu alongside State Highway 9 in October 2025. Approximately a metre high, it was flowering but had no seeds. No other woolly nightshade plants were found following a thorough search of the area. The plant was controlled by cut and paste, and no other woolly nightshade plants have since been found at the site.

## Moth plant

Moth plant was first found in Taupō in September 2025. A single vine, reported by a member of the public, was growing on a fence in town. It was quickly removed by council staff before it had a chance to flower and set any pods. The staff member visited again in February 2026, removing one small seedling that was found. Ongoing surveillance will continue at the site to ensure no further plants are able to establish. Staff discovered that the landowner of the property have another home in the north of the region and may have inadvertently brought moth plant seed down in soil. This case highlights the importance of the people noticing and reporting pest plants, and of the potential pathways of their spread.



## Banana passionfruit

Banana passionfruit has only been found in and around Accacia Bay, in the Taupō district, and includes two hot spot areas and a number of smaller infestations. This year, council staff and contractors surveyed further out from the known sites to delimit its spread. Pleasingly, only a few new sites were found, mostly adjacent to known sites. All known sites – new and old – were targeted for control, with the work to be completed as a priority in the 2026/27 financial year.



## Case study



# Alligator weed – targeted control along the Ohinemuri River

Waikato Regional Council has achieved a major win in the fight against alligator weed along the Ohinemuri River, reducing the area of infestation by over 96 per cent.

Alligator weed, which can invade terrestrial, wetland and riverine sites, is one of our region's most significant pest plants. In waterways, alligator weed can form large, dense floating mats that can obstruct water flow, increase flood risk, reduce water quality and impact native plants and wildlife.

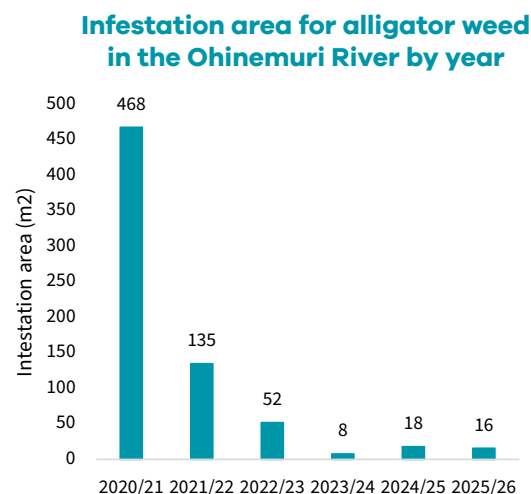
Alligator weed surveillance and control efforts are prioritised across the region, with a focus on high value areas, supporting previous control efforts to maintain gains, and targeting areas where alligator weed is absent or is present in only limited infestations.

Two large flood events in 2010 and 2012 in the vicinity of a known alligator weed site on the Ruahorehore Stream prompted the council to undertake regular surveillance downstream of its confluence (southeast of Waihi) with the Ohinemuri River. Annual surveillance was undertaken, mainly from the river. Tall dense riparian vegetation likely made the detection of terrestrial alligator infestations challenging.

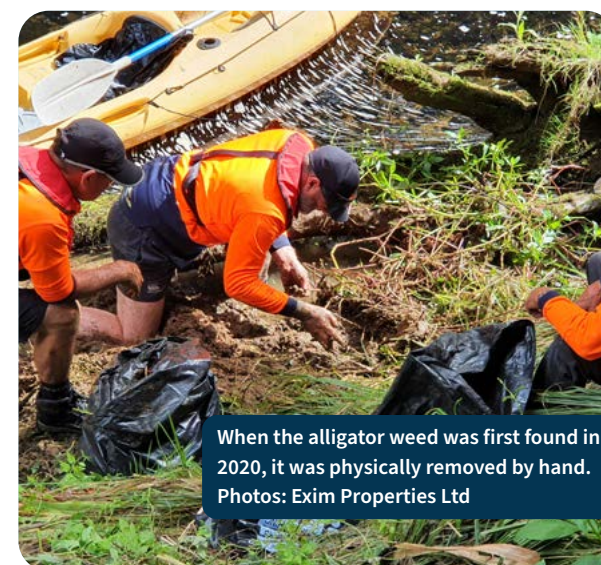
In 2020, 173 patches of alligator weed were found along the Ohinemuri River, between the confluence and Waikino, mostly as floating mats in the river. Some patches were as large as 10 square metres – showing how fast alligator weed can grow in favourable conditions.

Urgent action was required to prevent further spread, particularly should another flood event occur. A decision was made to physically remove the alligator weed by hand, rather than applying for a resource consent to spray over water. Nets and barriers were set up below the control areas to capture any plant fragments, and the removed plant material was carefully bagged for disposal. Almost two tonnes of alligator weed was physically removed from the river. Patches along the terrestrial river margins were controlled at the same time using herbicide spray.

Six years on, surveillance of the controlled areas shows we are winning. The area of infestations has reduced from a total of 468 square metres to 16 square metres – a reduction of 96.6 per cent. The long-term goal is to eradicate alligator weed from this river system and prevent the risk of it spreading downstream into the Waihou River, with surveillance and control efforts continuing towards this.



## Case study



# Sustained control programme

The sustained control programme is used to reduce the impacts of well established pest on biodiversity and economic values, and their spread to other properties.

This includes to neighbouring properties and areas where control is already being undertaken. The programme also includes preventing spread from transport corridors, cycleways and quarries. The council’s role is generally to respond to a complaint from a compliant occupier, who wants an adjoining neighbouring property to undertake control to prevent spread across a shared boundary.

The council will work with neighbour(s) to help them comply with RPMP rules, providing advice and information, and taking enforcement action if necessary. All quarries within the region have received a letter updating them on their responsibilities in relation to sustained control species in the new RPMP.

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Over the duration of the RPMP, prevent the spread of sustained control pest plants to neighbouring properties where those pest plants are being actively managed. Ensure transport corridors and quarries reduce the risk of sustained control pest plants being spread around the region.</li><li>• Over the duration of the RPMP, sustainably control common brushtail possums within priority possum control areas and across the Waikato region to minimise adverse effects and impacts as identified in the RPMP and their spread to neighbouring properties.</li><li>• Over the duration of the RPMP, sustainably control feral rabbits to level 4 or below on the Modified McLean Rabbit Infestation Scale 2012 where they have been identified as having adverse effects on environmental, production, cultural and amenity values in the Waikato region, and to reduce their impacts on neighbouring properties.</li><li>• Over the duration of the RPMP, sustainably control magpies, common and German wasps within the Waikato region where they present a risk to public health to minimise adverse effects and impacts as identified in the RPMP.</li></ul> |
| Outcome   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Impacts of these pests are managed to an acceptable level.</li><li>• The spread of these pests across boundaries are managed.</li><li>• Strategic investment in areas where it will support meaningful outcomes.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |



Gorse

# Priority possum control programme

The council undertakes maintenance possum control in priority possum control areas (PPCA) covering over 550,000 hectares.

HALO sites are controlled regularly, particularly for rats and possums. Control operations undertaken by council contractors are required to achieve  $\leq 5\%$  RTC for ground control operations and  $\leq 3\%$  RTC for aerial control operations<sup>1</sup> in PPCA and  $\leq 5\%$  RTC in HALO blocks.

Work in this programme complements pest animal control undertaken by the Department of Conservation (DOC), iwi, local councils, community groups and landowners across the region. To identify when maintenance control is required within PPCA, the council undertakes trend RTC monitoring to determine possum population levels. When a PPCA has a trend result above the 3 or 5 per cent residual trap catch (RTC) index threshold, this triggers the need for maintenance control. Control is generally undertaken on a three-to-four-year cycle depending on the RTC results achieved and trend monitoring results overtime. Trend and performance (post-control) monitoring results are presented in the graph on page 27.

## Objective

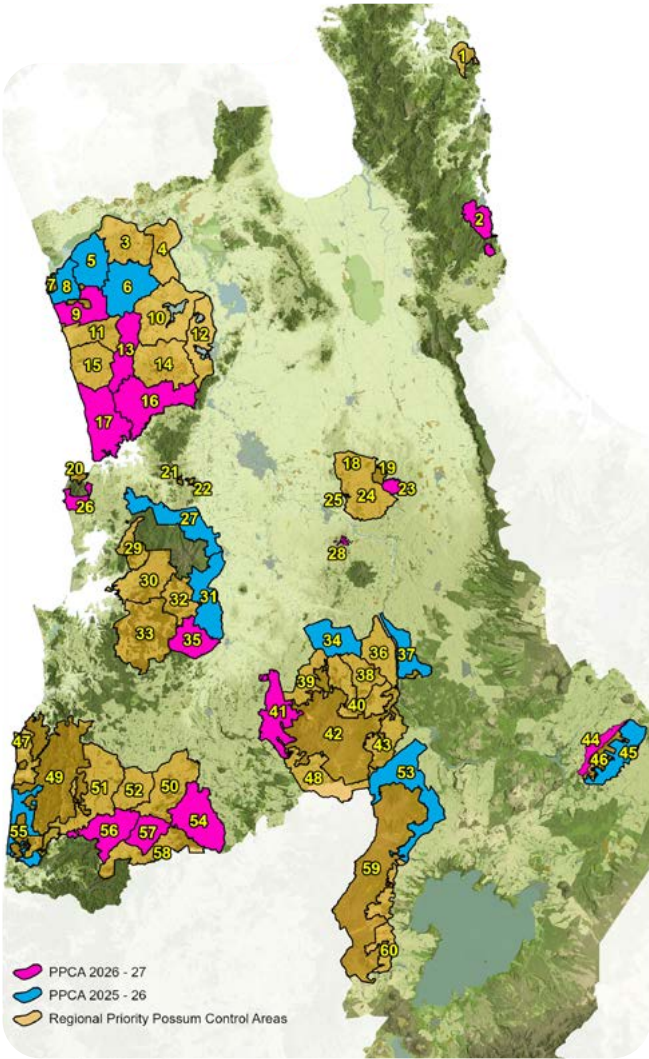
Minimising the adverse effects and impacts caused by possums on economic and environmental values within Priority Possum Control Areas (PPCA) and prevent their spread to and impacts on neighbouring properties where they are being actively managed.

## KPIs

- All PPCA ground control operations achieve a mean 5% Residual Trap Catch (RTC), and aerial control operations achieve a mean 3% RTC within the contract timeframes.
- Annual HALO ground control operations are completed by 30 September.
- Maintenance possum control is carried out to best practice standards and in accordance with relevant legislation.

1 The residual trap-catch (RTC) index is a method of determining relative possum density. Lines of 10 leg-hold traps, spaced 20 metres apart, are set for three consecutive nights in random locations within the treatment area, before and after control. The number of lines used is determined by the size of the management area. The standard performance target commonly set for a reduction in possum densities, is an RTC of  $\leq 5\%$  (i.e. less than 5 possums caught for every 100 trap-nights) for ground control operations and  $\leq 3\%$  (i.e. less than 3 possums caught for every 100 trap-nights) for aerial operations.

# Priority possum control areas in the Waikato region



## 2025/2026 PPCA and HALO operations:

### PPCA (132,716 ha) – post-control % RTC

- Piopio East Farmland – 1.68% RTC\*
- Whitehall/Te Miro – 2.56% RTC\*
- Whareorino Farmland – 2.76%\*
- Whangapē – 0.81% RTC\*
- Ngaroma 2 – 3.19% RTC\*
- Pukekawa – 1.30% RTC\*
- Rotowaro – TBC\*
- Nukuhakari 1 Farmland – 1.24% RTC\*
- Port Waikato Farmland North – 3.94% RTC
- Te Kohanga Farmland – 3.34% RTC
- Glen Murray – 4.27% RTC
- Pirongia North Buffer – 0.96% RTC
- Waipā Pūnui 2 – 1.34% RTC
- Nukuhakari 2 – TBC<sup>+</sup>
- Waotu – 3.06% RTC
- Arohena 1 – 0.84% RTC
- North Taupō – underway<sup>♦</sup>
- Waikite Valley Farmland 2B – underway<sup>♦</sup>

### DOC/WRC collaborative operations (2,702 ha private land)

- Mount Pirongia Bush (DOC/WRC) – private land – 0.00% RTC
- Otahu Bush (DOC/WRC) – private land – 0.30% RTC

### DOC/WRC/Tipu Mātoro collaborative operations (787 ha private land)

- Te Kopia/Paeroa Range (DOC/WRC/Tipu Mātoro) (deferred by DOC from 24/25) – PCL & private land – 0.61% RTC

### Hamilton HALO (617 ha) – post-control % RTI

- Pukemako – 3.33% RTI2
- Te Miro – 10.00% RTI
- Tirohanga – 2.50% RTI

## 2026/2027 PPCA and HALO proposed operations:

### PPCA – post-control % RTC

- Rotowaro – TBC<sup>+</sup>
- Nukuhakari 2 - TBC<sup>+</sup>
- North Taupō – TBC<sup>♦</sup>
- Waikite Valley Farmland 2B – TBC<sup>♦</sup>
- Otahu Farmland
- Port Waikato South
- Naike
- Te Akau
- Waingāro
- Mount Karioi South
- Honikiwi
- Waipā River Farmland
- Mokauiti 2 Farmland
- Mahoenui
- Aria
- Waikite Valley 2A
- Te Tapui B Bush

### DOC/WRC collaborative operations

- Whenuakite Bush (DOC/WRC) – private land
- Rangitoto Range (DOC/WRC) – private land

### Hamilton HALO (215 ha)

- Pukemako
- Tirohanga

#### Key

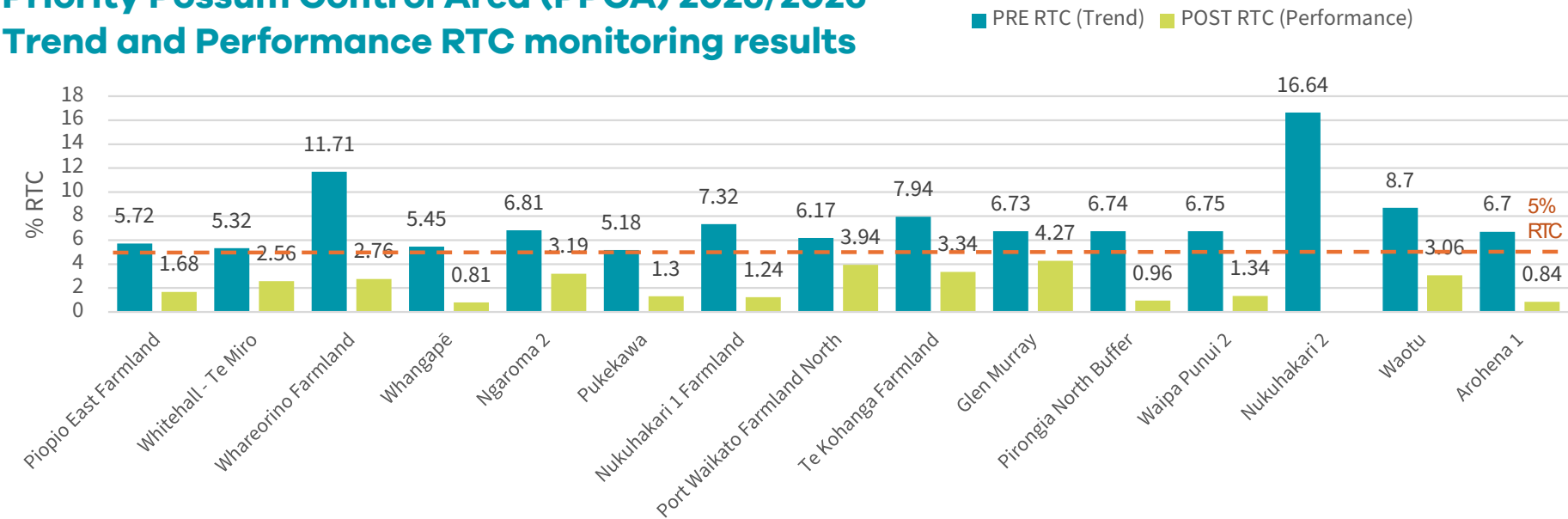
\* Operation completed in 25/26

♦ Control occurred in 24/25 but operation has not been finalised – results reported in 25/26.

<sup>+</sup> Control completed in 25/26 with results reported in 26/27



# Priority Possum Control Area (PPCA) 2025/2026 Trend and Performance RTC monitoring results



## Auditing

A selection of PPCA are audited each year using the council’s auditing standard operating procedures, as follows.

- All aerial operations are audited.
- Every pest animal contractor is audited at least once every year.
- New pest animal contractors are audited on their first control.
- Any breaches identified in council audits are resolved by following SOP guidelines, within the timeframes of each PPCA project.

A total of 18 audits were completed in the 2025/2026 financial year, including:

- 14 audits of ground control operations (10 operational and four decontamination audits) in PPCA and HALO areas
- one audit of aerial control operation completed by council staff in the PPCA programme
- three audits of the council’s operational performance monitoring (result/trend RTC/RTI).

Audits are undertaken to identify areas for improvement in the delivery of the PPCA or HALO programmes. Contractors are always notified of any issues or breaches identified, with follow up by council to ensure contractor processes and procedures are modified accordingly or improvements made. Our contractors exhibit a continuing commitment to health and safety practices in a high-risk industry, with all identified issues addressed and resolved this financial year.



# Wilding Conifer Programme

The 2025/26 Wilding Conifer Control Programme had a budget of \$350,730, including a contribution from the Ministry for Primary Industries. However, MPI's contribution was again significantly less than in previous years, with the council needing to increase its contribution to ensure gains made in the programme to date were not lost. Several landowners also contributed significantly to the programme.

In 2025/26, wilding conifer control was undertaken at nine sites on the Coromandel Peninsula, one site around Lake Taupō, and one in Tongariro National Park.

We expanded control at existing sites in Whangapoua, Kuaotunu, Whitianga Harbour and Whenuakite, and began initial control at new sites in Port Charles and Whangamatā. Details of some of these projects can be found below.

Altogether, the Coromandel operational areas covered a total of about 2100 hectares. Wherever possible, large trees were controlled by drilling and filling; felling was undertaken in areas where dead standing trees would pose safety risk to property, people, or culturally sensitive sites. Young wildings were controlled either by hand pulling or cutting and pasting of stumps.

The work was carried out on land of different tenure, by contractors, community groups, iwi and private landowners. The requirement of multi-year control at many of the sites emphasises the need for long-term funding commitments to adequately manage wilding conifers.

A Wilding Conifer Priority Sites Report for the Taupō area was also developed in 2025/26 to help guide and prioritise wilding conifer work in the area going forward.



Wilding conifers

## Opera Point Reserve – Whangapoua

Completion of phase two of the council's Opera Point Reserve wilding conifer project – the felling of conifers on the north head of the Whangapoua Harbour – was delayed in 2025/26. This was due to track closures resulting from the impacts of severe weather events and staff turnover at the council. Phase one included drilling and filling wilding conifers in the reserve. Phase two, the felling of the remaining wilding conifers, started in June 2026. Although more expensive than drill and fill control, which leaves trees as standing dead, felling will enable the trees to be brought down in a controlled manner, reducing risks to tracks, other infrastructure, culturally sensitive sites, and people using the reserve. Felling also makes control more complex and requires track closures. The results of this control work will be reported on in 2026/2027.

Wilding conifer control at Opera Point supports the restoration and preservation efforts by the Whangapoua Community Association, Department of Conservation and local iwi under the banner of the Opera Point Partnership (OPP).



Phase two of wilding pine conifer work was due to start at Opera Point, Whangapoua, in June 2026.

## Tunaiti

Highly visible across the Otahu River mouth from Whangamatā, Tunaiti is an iconic part of the coastal landscape. It is an ecologically and culturally significant area, owned by Ngāti Pū, and the focus of ongoing restoration efforts led by the Tunaiti Kaitiaki Rōpū. This area is also a council priority biodiversity site and receives possum control as part of our Priority Possum Control Programme.

Wilding pines there pose a significant threat to sacred wāhi tapu sites and native coastal ecosystems. The council contracted Predator Free Hauraki in 2025/26 to undertake wilding pine control at Tunaiti, primarily using the drill-and-fill method. A key component of the project was iwi workforce development, so Predator Free Hauraki has been training two Ngāti Pū members in wilding pine control to help build local capability and strengthen iwi-led kaitiakitanga of the site. This integrated approach has supported local employment, enhanced iwi participation in environmental restoration, and contributes to the long-term management and protection of this important area.



Predator Free Hauraki is training two Ngāti Pū members in wilding pine control at Tunaiti.

## Tongariro

To protect the significant ecological, cultural and aesthetic values of Tongariro National Park and the wider central North Island landscape, and build on previous investment in wilding control, the council initiated a project in 2025/26 to tackle Douglas fir infestations along part of the park's northern boundary.

Drone technology was used to capture high-resolution aerial imagery across 40 hectares of wilding Douglas fir infested regenerating forest. From this imagery, canopy-visible wilding saplings and trees were mapped, enabling them to be accurately located for control on the ground. The mapping also provides a baseline for tracking control efficacy over time.

More than 1400 wilding Douglas fir were controlled this year. Mapping significantly improved efficiency, allowing contractors to focus on control rather than time-intensive grid searching. Ongoing surveillance and follow-up control will be undertaken as required.

The approach demonstrates a scalable and cost-effective method that can be applied for other pest plant species. There is potential to further enhance this work through machine learning – enabling automated detection of visually distinct species like wilding conifers.

## Rangitira Point



Wilding conifer control at Rangitira Point, on the northern side of Lake Taupō, began in 2020/21. The original project covered 741 hectares across five land parcels, including both Māori land and public conservation land. This area was identified as a high priority for wilding control due to its significant landscape, recreational, cultural and biodiversity values.

Mapping from aerial imagery identified 2406 scattered wilding trees and approximately 30 hectares of dense wilding forest. The infestations were dominated by radiata pine (*Pinus radiata*), with more localised occurrences of maritime pine (*P. pinaster*) and Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). Substantial progress has been made in reducing the infestations across the project area.

In 2025/26, the council funded follow-up control on two of the original land parcels. Earlier work had successfully controlled most wildings, with only a small number of mature (approximately 50-100) and younger trees remaining, mainly in difficult to access locations. Control in the steep and hazardous areas, including cliffs above the lake, required abseiling to safely access and treat the remaining trees. Care was taken to minimise impacts on the surrounding regenerating native vegetation. Contractors used a combination of hand pulling, hand sawing and painting, and drill-and-fill methods, depending on the terrain and tree size.

This follow-up work consolidates earlier gains by removing more potential seed sources and controlling new seedlings before they can mature, helping to protect the values of Rangitira Point.

# Site-led programmes

Site-led pest management is about preserving the values of a place, rather than targeting a specific pest species.

Three site-led programmes have been identified in RPMP:

- the Hūnua Ranges Pest Management Area (programme administered by Auckland Council)
- Wetlands
- Project Yellow.

The pests targeted under a site-led programme vary, depending on the effects of pests on the site’s values.

## Wetlands site-led programme

There are 24 pest plants and four pest animals (all turtles) included within the wetland site-led programme. These pests have the potential to impact wetland environments. If a wetland site meets the site-led RPMP criteria, then there are rules in the RPMP to support occupier or community-group led wetland restoration work. To date there are no wetland site-led programmes in the Waikato region.

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Objective | Over the duration of the plan, the impacts of the pests listed in table 14 and 15 of the RPMP in wetland sites of high ecological value, or high value to the community or occupiers, are minimised. |
| Outcome   | Community groups and stakeholders are supported in minimising the adverse effects of specific pests on the values of identified sites.                                                               |



Whangamarino wetland

# Project Yellow site-led programme

Project Yellow targets three yellow-flowered, nitrogen-fixing pest plants: broom, gorse and tree lupin/yellow bush lupin.

Nine organisations, including Waikato Regional Council, work collaboratively to achieve the vision of protecting the unique natural environment, iconic vistas and cultural significance of the Desert Road area from these invasive pest plants.

In 2025/26, the council engaged experienced contractors to undertake ground control of these invasive legumes across multiple areas in the Desert Road. Hundreds of plants were successfully controlled. Emphasis again was on finding and controlling outlying plants to limit further spread. In addition, a funding boost from council allowed for a greater control effort, including in the Mangatoetoenui Quarry site and environs, one of largest ‘yellow’ infestations along the Desert Road. Aerial imagery was used to identify and delimit control targets.

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Objective | Over the duration of the plan, control of the pest plants listed in table 16 of the RPMP will be undertaken so that the environmental, social, cultural, amenity and recreational values of the Central North Island Desert Road tussocklands are protected from the impacts of these pests. |
| Outcome   | Community groups and stakeholders are supported in minimising the adverse effects of specific pests on the values of identified Desert Road tussocklands.                                                                                                                                    |

| Activity                                     | Cost     |
|----------------------------------------------|----------|
| Ground control – Desert Road                 | \$45,000 |
| Contribution towards aerial imagery captured | \$2,500  |
| Total 2025/26 spend                          | \$47,500 |

Project Yellow partners:

- Department of Conservation
  - Genesis Energy
  - Horizons Regional Council
  - Lake Rotoaira Forest Trust
  - New Zealand Defence Force
- Transpower
  - Waikato Regional Council
  - Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency
  - Ngā Waihua o Paerangi (Ngāti Rangi)





## Part 2: Ētehi atu mahi tiakitanga taiao Other biosecurity activities

The 2022-2032 *Waikato Biosecurity Strategy* sets out the council's blueprint for ensuring we operate and maintain a collaborative, cohesive and comprehensive biosecurity system within the Waikato region over the next 10 years.

The strategy, which is non-statutory, integrates the council's regulatory (RPMP) and non-regulatory biosecurity functions (all other biosecurity activities such as monitoring and surveillance, research, incursion responses and collaborative action).

Strategic goals and key regional priorities are outlined to guide the delivery of our wider regional biosecurity activities.

Our strategic regional priorities are:

- Maintaining effective leadership and governance
- Working together as a region
- Valuing and building on our investments
- Better surveillance and intelligence systems
- Bright ideas and better ways

Biosecurity work relating to these regional priorities are highlighted in this section of the annual report.





# Effective leadership and governance

The council undertakes a range of actions to provide effective leadership and governance for regional biosecurity.

## Te Uru Kahika

Te Uru Kahika – Regional and Unitary Councils Aotearoa (TUK) is a collaborative partnership between New Zealand's 16 regional and unitary councils. Its purpose is to coordinate and deliver work with a strong focus on the integrated management of natural resources, including biodiversity and biosecurity.

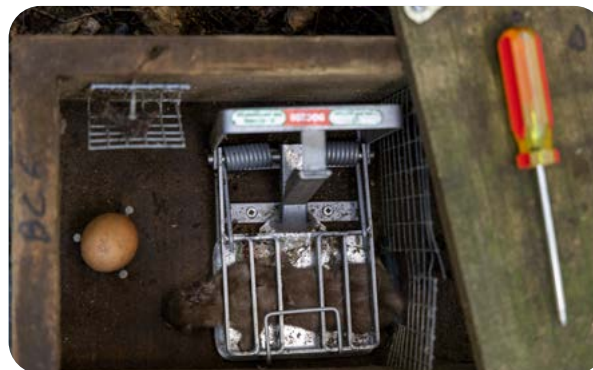
Many of the issues, challenges and opportunities faced at a regional level, including in the Waikato, are shared across the country. TUK enables councils to work together, pooling expertise, sharing knowledge, and developing consistent approaches to common problems.

Under the TUK framework, biodiversity and biosecurity managers from across the country come together through the Biodiversity and Biosecurity (B&B) Forum. This forum focuses on addressing shared challenges and advancing opportunities to develop practical, nationally consistent solutions that support coordinated action within and between regions.

Through the forum, managers collaborate on projects that promote best practice, improve consistency and support the development of new tools, methodologies and approaches. The group also works collectively to engage with central government, iwi and other stakeholders, helping to influence policy and align efforts at a national level.

## Trap.NZ

Trap.NZ is a free New Zealand web and app-based software system used by predator control groups, conservation projects and backyard trappers to record and manage pest control activities. It was initially developed with seed funding from the WWF Community Conservation Innovation Project, but is now run by a governance group of stakeholders, including TUK regional government experts, Predator Free 2050 (until 2025), DOC and its developer, Groundtruth. The data captured is private to each group, although it can be shared to help build a national online picture of predator and pest animal control efforts.



## Case study

### Weedbusters

Weedbusters is a long-running and highly successful joint interagency initiative funded by TUK. Established over 22 years ago by regional councils and the Department of Conservation, its goal is to raise awareness of the impacts of invasive weeds and encourage community action in weed management.

The Weedbusters programme is governed by a Weedbusters Advisory Group, made up of representatives from regional councils, the Department of Conservation and other central government and research organisations. This collaborative model enables a coordinated, nationwide approach to weed education and engagement.

Weedbusters provides a range of resources, including a well-established website, publications and communications material. These offer practical information on identifying and controlling a wide range of weed species, promote environmentally friendly alternatives, and showcases the work of community Weedbuster groups across the country.

Through events, education programmes and outreach activities, Weedbusters encourages individuals, schools and community groups to get involved in protecting their local environments. Its well-recognised mascot, Woody Weed, plays a key role in engaging audiences – particularly younger people – at schools and community events.

This enduring initiative continues to inspire and support communities to take action against invasive weeds.



Want to know more  
about weeds?  
[weedbusters.org.nz](https://weedbusters.org.nz)



# Kura Waitī ki Kura Waitā

Launched in 2022, the Kura Waitī ki Kura Waitā River Schools to Moana Schools programme helps build the confidence of rangatahi and their sense of connection to te taiao (environment), while fostering te reo, tikanga and mātauranga Māori. While using both traditional and contemporary approaches to environmental education and learning, a Māori world view is at the heart of the programme. To date there have been 20 participating kura.

This year, the council revised the programme to include freshwater biosecurity content, aligning it with mātauranga Māori and translating it into te reo. This updated Kura Waitī freshwater biosecurity kaupapa is now ready to be delivered to participating kura.

This builds on a successful pilot project in which resources about koi carp were refreshed through a te ao Māori lens and shared with kura kaupapa across the region. Tamariki enjoyed learning about the challenges involved in protecting our awa and the actions that they can take to help safeguard these valued ecosystems.

The next step will be a review of the Kura Waitā (Moana Schools) programme to incorporate marine biosecurity content.



## Case study





# Working together as a region

The council undertakes a range of actions to promote and facilitate everyone working together to achieve regional biosecurity outcomes.

## Tackling wild kiwifruit

Waikato Regional Council and Kiwifruit Vine Health (KVH) have signed a collaboration agreement to work together to tackle wild kiwifruit.

The formal agreement, signed early in 2026, will help reduce the impact of wild kiwifruit on the Waikato region's biodiversity and help to safeguard the region's kiwifruit industry. It guides how our organisations will work together, with the council primarily responsible for ground-based surveillance, KVH primarily responsible for control, and costs of aerial surveillance to be shared. A jointly agreed work programme will be developed each year, while both organisations retain the ability to undertake additional work as resources allow.

KVH was established in 2010 to lead the kiwifruit industry's biosecurity response to *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *actinidiae* (Psa), a bacterial disease that affects kiwifruit vines. They support New Zealand kiwifruit growers and the wider industry to 'protect themselves from biosecurity threats', including by encouraging surveillance for early detection of new or emerging pests and diseases, implementing industry pathway management plans and global scanning of emerging risks.

Wild kiwifruit infestations can establish when birds and animals spread seeds after eating kiwifruit, or people discard fruit in rural areas, road reserves and natural areas. Left unmanaged, the vines can impact biodiversity values, and wild infestations pose a risk to the industry as they can harbour pests and diseases, including Psa.

The opportunity for the council and KVH to work together was identified during consultation for the Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2023 (RPMP). KVH had requested wild kiwifruit be added to the RPMP in recognition of the risk they present, and it became part of the region's progressive containment programme. The council has since been undertaking surveillance for wild kiwifruit sites, concentrating efforts on areas near to historic and active kiwifruit orchards.

The total number of wild kiwifruit infestations identified across the Waikato region now stands at 82: in 2025/26, aerial surveillance for pest plants in the Coromandel Peninsula identified 18 new wild kiwifruit sites, while another 31 sites were found in other areas across the region. Aerial surveillance is proving particularly effective for detecting wild kiwifruit vines, particularly in autumn and winter, when their yellowing leaves stand out against the surrounding green native and plantation forests.

## Case study

Ten wild kiwifruit infestations – covering an area of more than 340 square metres – were controlled by council staff this financial year. With the agreement now in place, we're looking forward to working with KVH to continue to reduce the impacts of wild kiwifruit on the region's biodiversity and help protect one New Zealand's most valuable horticultural industries.



# Freshwater biosecurity

Check, Clean, Dry (CCD) is the national freshwater biosecurity call to action to prevent the spread of invasive freshwater pests and weeds. Water users are urged to check their clothing, footwear, equipment and boats for hitchhiking organisms, clean all items thoroughly to remove any material, and dry them completely (for at least 48 hours) before entering another waterway.

Human mediated pathways pose the biggest risk of spreading highly invasive freshwater pests such as invasive freshwater clams (Corbicula), pest fish and aquatic weeds within and between waterways. Tiny larvae or small fragments of invasive plant material can survive being moved to establish in new areas.

During 2025/26, council staff, summer students and co-funded advocates again actively promoted the CCD message, including at boat ramps, 15 major watersports events on the Waikato River, community events and boat shows. Our eight summer students washed down more than 100 boats leaving the Waikato River and engaged with more than 3750 people. Encouragingly, it was found that awareness of the CCD message increased significantly over the summer, from 30 per cent at the start of season, rising to 65 per cent by the end. In addition, more than half of water users spoken to reported noticing CCD signage at boat ramps.

Continued advocacy is key to embedding CCD behaviours and safeguarding our waterways.



Kids Greening Taupō learn about CCD behaviours.

# Marine biosecurity advocacy

## Case study

Biofouling, the accumulation of marine life on boat hulls, anchors and equipment, is one of the main pathways for spread of marine pests throughout Aotearoa.

The Top of the North Marine Biosecurity Partnership brings together regional and unitary councils from Northland, Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne and Hawke's Bay, along with representatives from BNZ and DOC, in recognition of the high volume of marine traffic across northern waters – vessels frequently moving between the regions' harbours, accessible bays and coastal towns increases the risk of marine pests being spread.

Our partnership's 'Clean below? Good to go' message promotes regular cleaning of vessels, gear and equipment to reduce risk. Over the summer, we promoted this message at markets and boat ramps in coastal areas.

Marine biosecurity is not just about permanently moored vessels though, with entanglement pests like exotic caulerpa seaweed able to hitch a ride on gear and anchors and be moved to other coastal sites. Council funded Māori Ko Moehau Ki Tai ambassadors to help raise awareness and encourage behaviour change to stop the spread of exotic caulerpa through the "See weed? Bag it, bin it" call to action for boaties. They completed over 192 hours of engagement and had more than 380 meaningful conversations with the boating public.

The Top of the North Marine Biosecurity Partnership's website is found online at [marinepests.nz](https://marinepests.nz).



Exotic caulerpa can spread on anchors and gear.



Mediterranean fanworm fouling on the bottom of a marine vessel.

# Kauri protection

Our kauri programme has again had a strong focus on advocacy, education and outreach – sharing key messages about kauri protection. This year that has included having summer students and track ambassadors at key locations in the Coromandel Peninsula, development of secondary school education, te reo and other kauri protection resources, and radio interviews. In addition, the kauri programme has also:

- installed two more cleaning stations at key locations in the Coromandel Peninsula
- undertaken kauri health assessments and monitoring
- hosted six training sessions for regional councils, DOC, iwi and Enviroschools facilitators on kauri health surveillance and soil sampling, phosphite treatment, and the kauri education programme
- contributed to and participated in DOC-led kauri validation training, providing guidance on identifying kauri from aerial imagery



The kauri programme has engaged with nurseries to support and promote Plant Pass to help protect kauri.

## Track ambassador programme at Long Bay

Long Bay Reserve, located northwest of Coromandel township, is well known for its popular kauri loop track. The track winds up through coastal forest from the campground, passing an ancient kauri estimated to be over 1200 years old.

In partnership with Thames Coromandel District Council (TCDC), in 2025/26 we delivered our track ambassador programme for a fourth year.

Ambassadors were stationed at the track entrance from 16 December 2025 to 5 April 2026, engaging directly with visitors to promote the protection of kauri.

During this period, ambassadors spoke with over 2500 visitors, sharing practical guidance on protecting kauri. Key messages included arriving with clean footwear and gear, using cleaning stations correctly, staying on designated tracks, and cleaning again when exiting the forest.

Visitor engagement had a wide audience reach: 27 per cent from the local area, 12 per cent from elsewhere in the Waikato, 14 per cent from Auckland, and 30 per cent international visitors.

The council has previously supported the protection of kauri in this ngahere by funding track and fencing upgrades and introducing cleaning stations and educational signage.

## Case study

### Education – partnership with Enviroschools

The Kauri Team supported the delivery of our interactive kauri education programme, including the award-winning Kauri Pou Kaitiaki VR experience, to Enviroschools. A highlight of 2025/26 was delivering the programme to every single student at Matamata Intermediate – more than 400 students – before their camp in Kauaeranga Valley. To date, 34 schools and more than 2000 students have participated in the programme across in the region. The programme engages students from years 2-12, focusing on kauri protection and biosecurity awareness hands on-learning opportunities.

In term 3 of 2026, we will be sharing our education programme and resources with Bay of Plenty Regional Council so they, too, can upskill their rangitahi in kauri protection.



Students from Matamata Intermediate learn about protecting kauri ahead of their camp in Kauaeranga Valley.

# The second annual HCC Moth Plant Competition

Millions of potential new moth plants have been prevented from establishing in the Hamilton area, thanks to participants in the second annual Hamilton City Council Moth Plant Competition.

The competition, which is run with support from Waikato Regional Council, was held between 1 and 16 May 2026 to raise awareness of the potential impacts of this pod-producing, fast growing vine that smothers native plants and trees.

A total of 18,994 pods – more than double the number submitted last year – and vines were controlled by three schools and 36 individuals: 12,173 pods and 6821 vines. This far exceeded HCC's goal of doubling last year's 7000 entries. With each pod producing up to 1000 seeds, that could have been potentially millions of new moth plants in the city, so it's a great win for the community and city's natural environment.

Entrants were encouraged to take photos of the moth plant pods and vines they collected. Prizes were awarded for the most moth plant pods, most seedlings (roots attached) and the thickest vine. There were also spot prizes sponsored by Mitre 10 MEGA Te Rapa & Ruakura, Jumpflex, Daltons and Waikato Regional Council.

## Case study



Entrants were encouraged to take photos of the moth plant pods and vines they collected.



Students from Frankton School with their competition entry.



# Valuing and building on our investments

The council undertakes a range of actions to protect regional investment into biosecurity programmes.

## Nukuhakari-Awakino – collective mahi for healthier, resilient catchments

Recent extreme weather events and their impacts have highlighted the importance of healthy resilient catchments. Waikato Regional Council undertakes and supports a range of catchment and landscape-scale initiatives, including land retirement, planting, and pest animal control programmes that help strengthen catchment and environmental resilience.

Pest animals can significantly degrade catchment health by damaging vegetation, increasing soil exposure and accelerating erosion.

For more than two decades, council has focused priority possum control on farmland and forest buffering the Herangi Range and its seaward flowing catchments. In 2025/26, PPCA possum control was expanded south to the defensible boundary of the Awakino River to protect previous investment, maintain the gains already achieved, and contribute to long-term catchment resilience. Possum control through the expanded area will be delivered via a mix of aerial and ground-based methods, depending on the terrain. Large forest blocks, often on steep land, will be generally managed using aerial control, while farmland and smaller forested areas are treated using ground-based trapping and toxins.

A key strength of our region-wide Priority Possum Control (PPCA) Programme is our partnership with the Department of Conservation (DOC). DOC undertakes aerial control across high value public conservation land, while we manage the surrounding areas. This co-ordinated cross-tenure approach expands the area under sustained possum control, reduces reinvasion from unmanaged areas, and helps maintain pest control gains for longer.

This landscape-scale approach is also being applied to feral goat control, another priority in this area. Goats have significant environmental, ecological and agricultural impacts, and are highly mobile, with rivers also helping to limit their spread. The council contributes funding to DOC's feral goat programme for control on private land adjacent to public conservation land.

Over the last two years, more than 1700 goats have been removed from around 2000 hectares of private land in southern Nukuhakari-Awakino area, on top of over 3000 removed from the Herangi Range and adjoining DOC reserves. Since 2013, the programme has controlled more than 24,000 goats across this wider area.

### Case study



Landowners and managers also contribute to agency pest control efforts – in the past year alone, NZ Carbon Farming has removed over 350 goats and 990 possums from its properties in this same area.

Pest management is closely linked to broader catchment and land management objectives. Alongside pest control, landowners in priority catchments and erosion-prone hill country are encouraged and supported to retire marginal land, establish native vegetation, fence waterways and forest remnants, and undertake erosion mitigation measures. Supported by funding from the Ministry for Primary Industries' Hill Country Erosion Programme, QEII National Trust, council rates and landowner contributions, this integrated approach demonstrates how coordinated pest management, erosion mitigation and habitat restoration can strengthen catchment resilience and deliver lasting environmental, economic and community benefits.

# National Interest Pest Response programme

There are nine pest plant species in the MPI National Interest Pest Response (NIPR) programme, two of which are present in the Waikato region: Manchurian wild rice (*Zizania latifolia*) and white bryony (*Bryonia cretica*). NIPR is a Biosecurity New Zealand programme that targets a small number of high-risk pest species that could cause serious environmental, economic, social and cultural harm if they become widely established in New Zealand. The programme focuses on eradicating or containing these pests before they spread further. In the Waikato region, we deliver species-led eradication programmes for both Manchurian wild rice and white bryony behalf of – and funded by – the Ministry for Primary Industries.

## White bryony

White bryony is targeted for eradication under the NIPR programme. The cucumber-like vine, which flowers in spring-summer, forms persistent branching underground tubers that must be dug up and removed as part of control work. Some tubers can weigh over 15 kilograms!

There are only two white bryony sites in the Waikato region: at Aria and Mokauiti. Council surveillance and control work began in 2001, with thousands of plants found at that time. In the past three years in Aria, and the past six years in Mokauiti, there has been no evidence of any new plants during annual surveillance. In 2025/26, over 230 hours of surveillance were undertaken covering 516 kilometres across both sites.

## Number of white bryony plants found per year



## Case study



White bryony flowers.  
Photo: meles\_muscaria, iNaturalist

## Manchurian wild rice

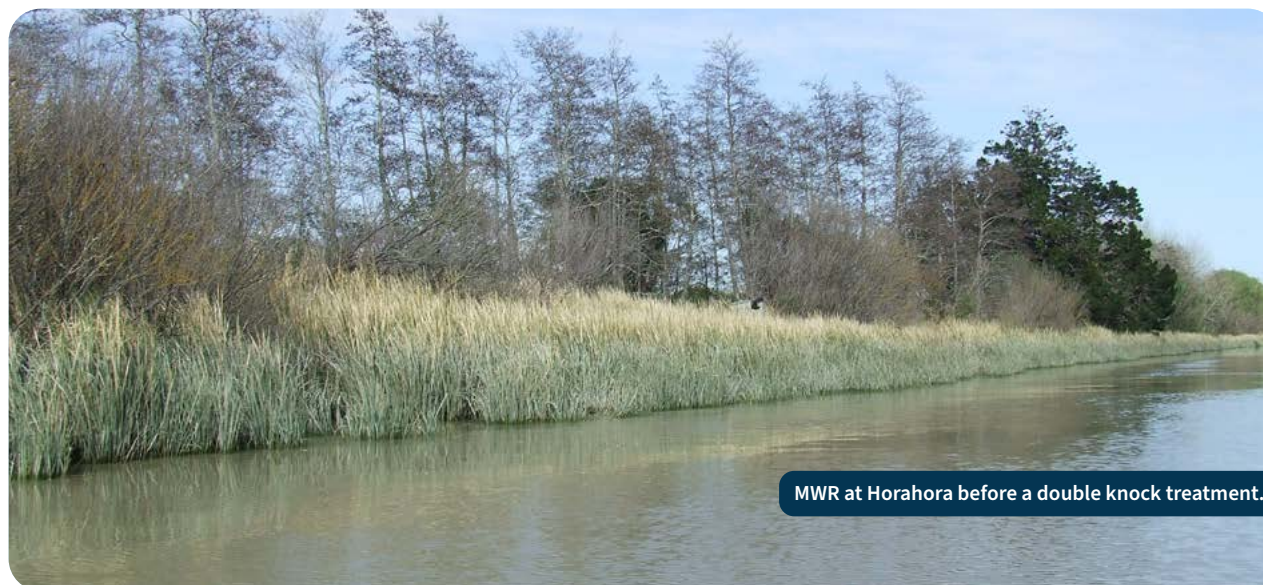
Manchurian wild rice (MWR) is a tall, invasive exotic grass that invades riparian margins, wetlands, drains, swamps and low-lying farmland. It forms dense stands and its deep roots can destroy stopbanks and native plant and fish habitats. MWR can also cause silt accumulation and alter water flow, increasing flood risk. In the Waikato region, the main infestations are found on the Hauraki Plains, adjacent to the Waihou and Piako rivers, at Horahora near Huntly and Lake Te Ko Utu in Cambridge.

The council has been managing MWR as part of NIPR since 2008, but our control efforts began in the 1980s. Initially, a helicopter was used to treat large infestations, but significant reductions were realised after the introduction of an airboat, which enabled access to previously inaccessible areas and improved herbicide efficacy.

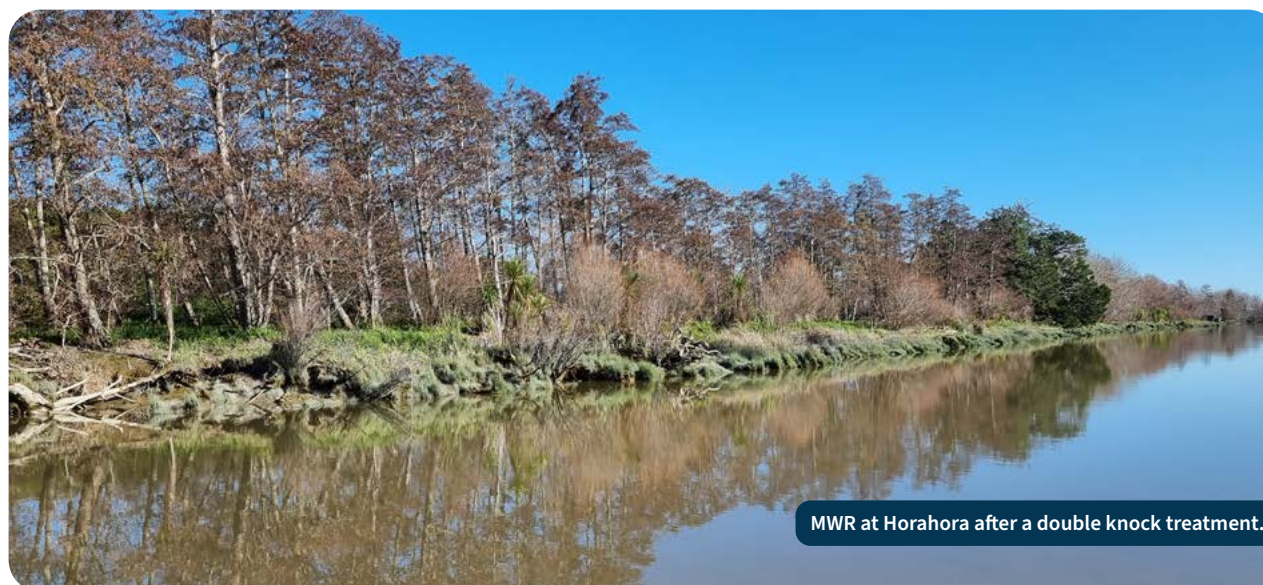
Annual surveillance and control work is mainly undertaken from the water. Long term management has been successful at aquatic sites and most of the remaining infestations are terrestrial – in low lying pastoral and riparian areas.

Over the years, the council has refined its control methods to improve efficacy. A successful ‘double knock’ treatment approach involves an initial spray treatment followed by a second treatment within three weeks. Another method proving effective at some sites is ‘cut and spray’, where tall mature MWR is cut using a scrub bar and the regrowth treated with herbicide approximately six months later.

Long-term commitment by MPI and the council to this eradication programme ensures we maintain our gains and continue to reduce MWR infestations to protect the region’s waterways, wetlands and productive land.



MWR at Horahora before a double knock treatment.



MWR at Horahora after a double knock treatment.

# Maintaining gains in the Tongariro-Turangi catchment

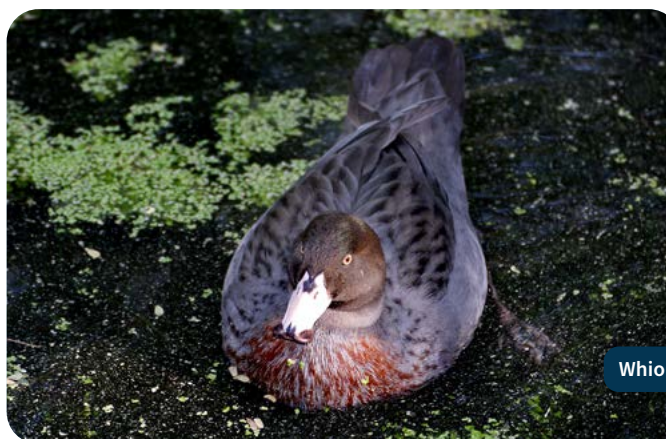
The Tongariro-Tūrangi catchment, located at the southern end of Lake Taupō, is one of the lower North Island's most significant biodiversity strongholds. The area is home to a range of threatened species, including native bats, whio (blue duck), mistletoe and pua o te reinga (*Dactylanthus taylorii*).

For more than 40 years, OSPRI's national bovine tuberculosis (TB) programme has reduced possum populations across this landscape to very low levels. With its vector control and eradication targets largely achieved, OSPRI recently indicated it plans to withdraw from the area, which creates a critical transition point. Without ongoing control, there is a high risk that possum and predator populations will rebound, reversing the gains made for biodiversity, productive land and ecosystem resilience.

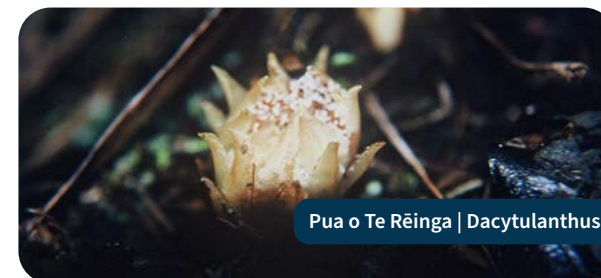
Waikato Regional Council is now considering how best to maintain these gains as responsibility transitions from a nationally funded disease-control programme to a broader landscape and biodiversity management approach.

This is not unfamiliar territory. We have successfully managed similar transitions following OSPRI's withdrawal from the Rangitoto and Hauhungaroa ranges, where ongoing pest control was incorporated into our Priority Possum Control Programme to protect environmental outcomes achieved through previous TB vector control operations.

The focus in Tongariro-Tūrangi will be on sustaining landscape-scale pest control while aligning it with wider catchment, biodiversity and community objectives. Success will depend on a highly collaborative approach. The council will work alongside mana whenua and iwi partners in planning and decision-making, while coordinating closely with DOC, Horizons Regional Council, landowners and other stakeholders. By building on existing partnerships and aligning programmes across agencies and land tenures, opportunities can be identified to improve operational efficiency and maintain effective pest management within existing budgets.



## Case study





# Better surveillance and intelligence systems

The council undertakes actions to improve surveillance and intelligence in regional biosecurity, so ensure the right information is available to the right people, and to add confidence to biosecurity decisions and actions.

## Marine surveillance programme

Our marine environment is vulnerable to pest species that can be transported long distances on the hulls of ships, in ballast water, or on marine equipment. We partner with the Bay of Plenty Regional Council dive team to undertake yearly marine surveillance at high-risk locations in the Waikato region coastal marine area (CMA). High risk areas are most often associated with vessel movement and equipment, like marinas, moorings and popular anchorages.

This year, the dive team completed an impressive amount of marine surveillance twice inspecting the Coromandel Peninsula's east coast marinas and mooring fields. In total, that included examining:

- 1198 vessel hulls
- 14 kilometres of pontoon
- 1764 piles
- 90 hectares of benthic habitat
- 51 mussel lines

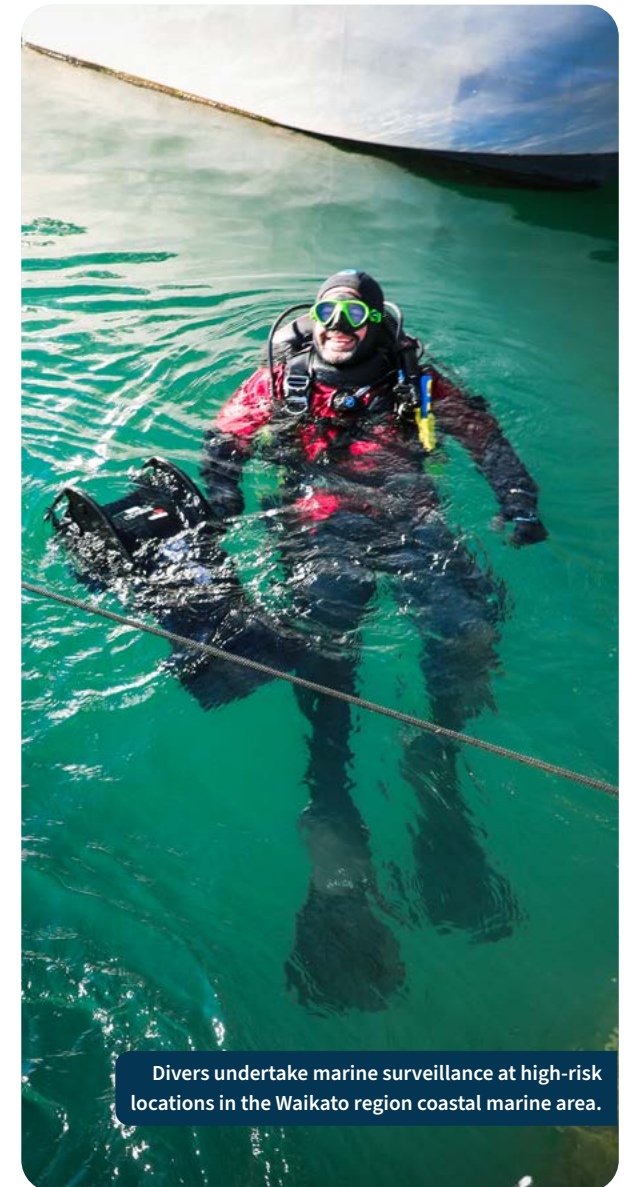
During surveillance the divers inspect for all marine pests, including those not yet found in New Zealand's marine environment.

Known marine pests in the Waikato CMA include Mediterranean fanworm (*Sabella spallanzanii*), clubbed tunicate (*Styela clava*) and exotic Caulerpa. These are our main priorities when it comes to stopping spread. High risk species that aren't currently in the country include northern Pacific seastar (*Asterias amurensis*), European green crab (*Carcinus maenas*) and *Caulerpa taxifolia*.

The submerged surfaces of vessel hulls are inspected for exotic marine organisms. Each hull is given a score on the Level of Foul (LOF) scale, from zero (no fouling) to five (heavy fouling coverage). If an unwanted organism is detected, the boat owner is contacted and encouraged to haul out their vessel and get it cleaned. Small infestations of larger organisms may be removed by the dive team at the time, but a haul-out for proper cleaning will still be required.

Surveillance data is captured in the Marine Vessel Portal (MVP), which is used by most councils around the country. The MVP is a valuable repository for data on marine pests, vessel fouling, and marine biosecurity surveillance.

## Case study



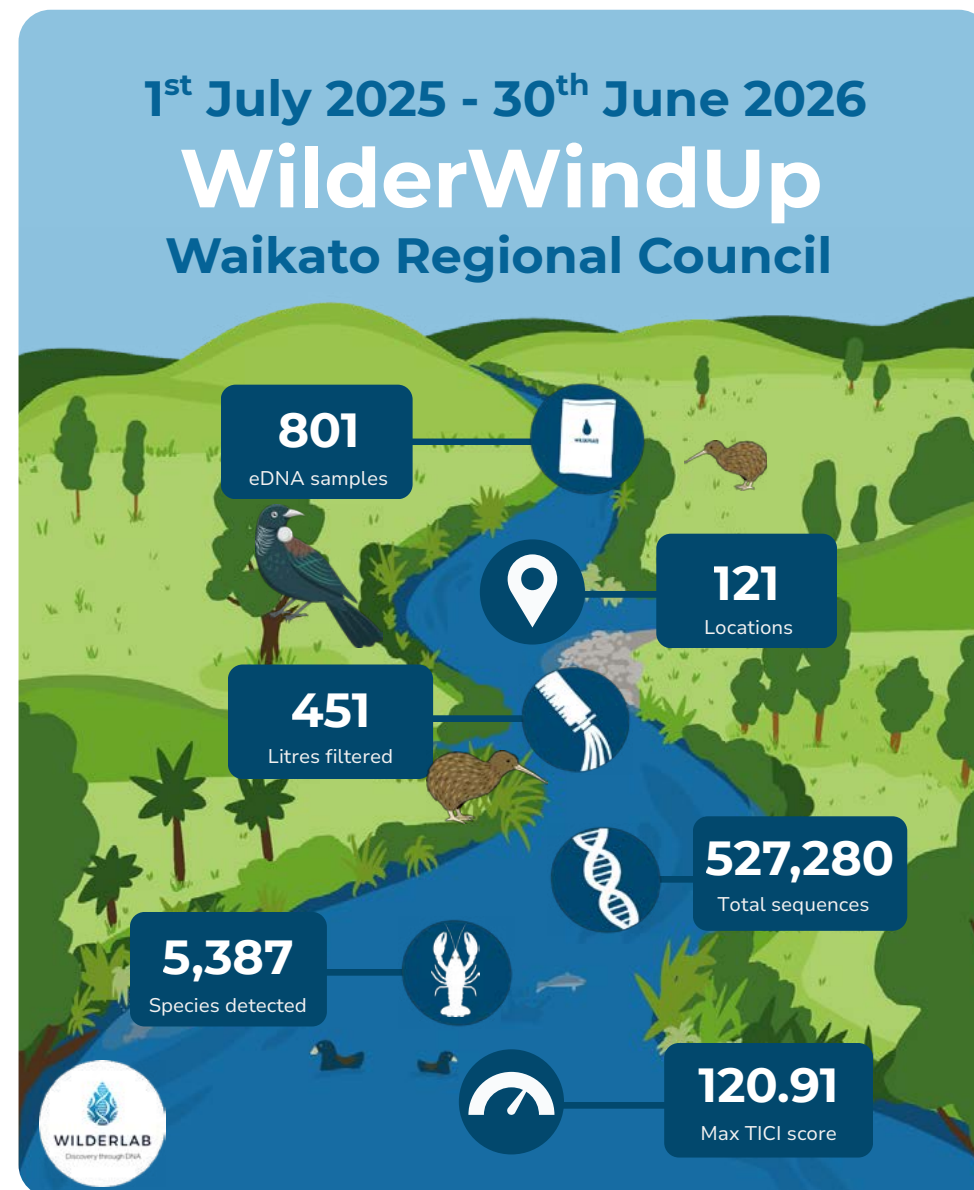
Divers undertake marine surveillance at high-risk locations in the Waikato region coastal marine area.

# eDNA – detecting new sites and emerging pests

Environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling is becoming more widely used in the Waikato region by council, iwi, community groups and research organisations.

eDNA are the traces of genetic material organisms shed in environments they are in or move through which can be detected from water, soil or air samples. Sampling of eDNA data is being used by council to help monitor stream and catchment health and detect the presence of specific native or exotic species of interest.

DNA fragments detected in water samples give us a broad snapshot of aquatic and terrestrial species present within a catchment, upstream of the sampling site. They also allow us to detect new pest animal or plant species, helping us find and manage new infestations early.



# Drones deliver smarter pest plant management

Waikato Regional Council is increasingly using drone technology to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and accuracy of pest plant management across the region.

Recent aquatic pest control projects targeting alligator weed at Te Otamanui Lagoon and Mexican waterlily in Lake Ohakuri demonstrate how drones are transforming the way infestations are detected, mapped, monitored and controlled.

Many pest plant sites present significant challenges for traditional ground-based surveillance.

Large waterbodies, dense vegetation, difficult access and limited visibility can make it challenging to accurately determine the extent of infestations or measure the success of control programmes.

Drones are helping overcome these challenges by providing a bird's-eye view and collecting repeatable high-resolution imagery across large areas quickly and safely.

By combining aerial surveillance, high-resolution mapping, data analytics and emerging AI capabilities, Waikato Regional Council is improving its ability to target control efforts, measure outcomes and make evidence-based decisions.

The success of these initiatives is creating a model that can be applied more broadly across the region's pest plant programme, delivering smarter, more cost-effective management and better environmental outcomes.

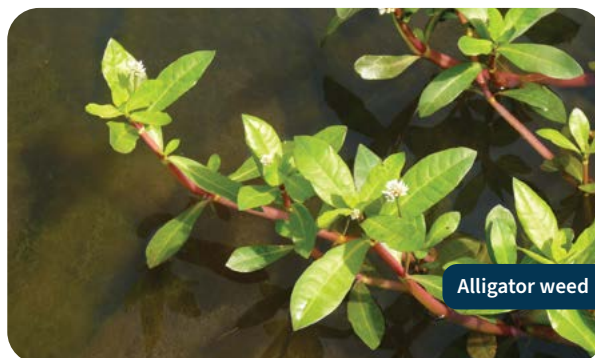
## Alligator weed

At Te Otamanui Lagoon, drone surveillance was introduced in 2025/26 to support management of alligator weed, one of the Waikato region's highest-priority aquatic pest plants.

The lagoon's size and lack of ground-based vantage points made it difficult to assess the full extent of the infestation. Using a drone, council staff were able to systematically survey the entire lagoon and capture hundreds of high-resolution images. These were stitched together using photogrammetry software to create a detailed aerial mosaic, providing an accurate current state map of the alligator weed distribution.

Following control operations, the survey was repeated. This showed clear changes in vegetation cover and a precise measure of treatment effectiveness, supporting better reporting and management decisions.

Repeated surveys will build a valuable time series of spatial data, creating opportunities to incorporate emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence to automatically identify and measure pest plant infestations.



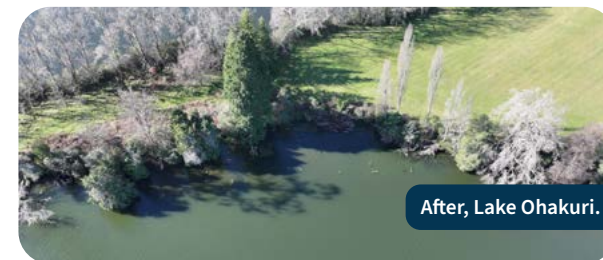
## Case study

## Mexican waterlily

Mexican waterlily has established around the shallow margins of much of Lake Ohakuri, the largest hydro lake on the Waikato River. It poses a threat to aquatic ecosystems by forming dense floating mats that outcompete native species and obstruct waterways.

During 2025/26, drone surveys and aerial imagery were used to identify and map infestations throughout the lake, providing a comprehensive picture of the pest plant's distribution and helping prioritise control efforts.

The technology allows council to quickly and thoroughly assess infestations and accurately measure control success. It helps guide the programme to progressively reduce Mexican waterlily infestations across Lake Ohakuri and downstream hydro lakes.



# New pests on the horizon

Responding to emerging threats from new pests and exotic species is an important part of Waikato Regional Council's biosecurity work.

The exotic pet trade in New Zealand includes species that have the potential to establish in the wild and become invasive if there were to escape or be deliberately released. As New Zealand's climate warms, the likelihood of some exotic species surviving, breeding and spreading may increase, creating new and evolving biosecurity challenges.

A current example of this is the ring-necked parakeet (*Psittacula kramera*), an exotic parrot native to tropical regions of Africa and Asia.

Recent sightings of single birds and small flocks around Hamilton, Cambridge and Karangahake are believed to be the result of escapes from captivity.

In response, our Biosecurity Team has undertaken targeted surveillance in areas where they have been seen and reached out to city council parks staff, landowners and businesses to raise awareness and encourage reporting. Early detection and rapid responses are critical to preventing the establishment of potential pest species before populations become widespread and difficult to manage.

Internationally, the ring-necked parakeet is considered one of the most widespread and detrimental, invasive bird species. If they were to establish in the Waikato region, they could cause significant damage to agricultural and horticultural crops, compete with native birds and bats for nesting sites, aggressively defend food sources, and carry diseases that could threaten native parrot species like kākāpō (residing at Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari) and kākā.

This work highlights the importance of vigilance and strong partnerships in protecting the region from emerging biosecurity threats. By identifying potential risks early and working collaboratively with communities, stakeholders and partner agencies like Te Uru Kahika, MPI and neighbouring regional councils, the council can help prevent new invasive species becoming established and avoid the significant costs and impacts that often follow.



**Waikato**  
REGIONAL COUNCIL  
*Te Kaunihera ā Rohe o Waikato*

## Report ring-necks

If you see or hear one, please call Waikato Regional Council on 0800 800 401 or email [exoticbirds@waikatoregion.govt.nz](mailto:exoticbirds@waikatoregion.govt.nz).



# Bright ideas and better ways

The council undertakes actions to encourage innovation in regional biosecurity.

## Rogues gallery of regional pests pops up at boat ramps

Young artists from across the Waikato are helping tackle invasive pests by turning biosecurity messages into eye-catching artwork displayed at boat ramps along the Waikato River.

Students from Aka Aka School, Tuakau College, Te Kōhanga School and Te Kauwhata Primary School created designs highlighting the threat posed by freshwater pests such as koi carp and invasive freshwater clams. Selected artworks now feature on 11 boat ramp signs as part of a collaborative project between the Waikato River Authority, Department of Conservation, Waikato Regional Council and the Waikato EnviroSchools programme.

The initiative was developed through Freshwater Biosecurity Guardians, an educational resource that helps senior primary, intermediate and secondary students learn about freshwater biosecurity and the importance of protecting waterways. Alongside classroom learning, students were invited to take practical action by designing artwork for public signage that encourages people to play their part in preventing the spread of pest species.

The new signs combine student artwork with 'Check, Clean, Dry' messaging, creating a more engaging and memorable way to reach river users. Waikato Regional Council maintains a network of biosecurity signage along the Waikato River to help raise awareness of the risks associated with moving aquatic pests between waterways.

Education remains a critical part of freshwater biosecurity management. Once invasive freshwater pests become established, control options are often limited and costly. Prevention is therefore the most effective tool available. By reminding boaties, anglers and other water users to Check, Clean and Dry equipment before moving between waterways, the campaign helps reduce the risk of spreading invasive species.

The project demonstrates how young people can contribute to environmental protection while helping build stronger community awareness of freshwater biosecurity issues.

### Case study



# The National Biocontrol Collective

The National Biocontrol Collective (the collective) is a long-running partnership that demonstrates the value of regional collaboration in tackling some of New Zealand's most widespread and challenging invasive pest plants.

Made up of regional councils, unitary authorities and the Department of Conservation, the collective pools funding from each agency to support biological control research carried out by the Bioeconomy Science Institute (formerly Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research).

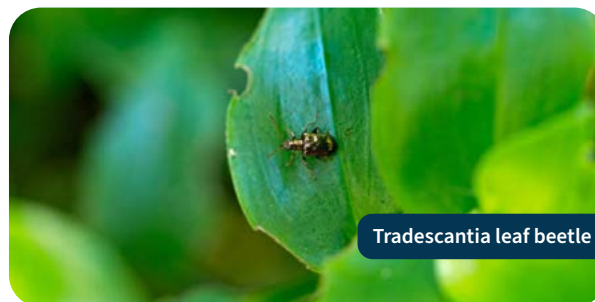
For more than 25 years, this shared investment model has enabled councils to collectively fund specialist research that would be costly to undertake individually, while ensuring priorities from across the country are reflected in the programme of work.

The collective focuses on invasive weeds that are well established and widespread, where eradication is no longer feasible and ongoing control using conventional methods is costly, labour-intensive and often unsustainable. In these situations, biological control offers a practical long-term management tool. Instead of replacing other control methods, biocontrol helps to reduce reliance on herbicide use and labour-intensive control and achieve more sustainable outcomes at a landscape scale.



Carefully selected natural enemies, known as biocontrol agents, are rigorously tested and approved before being released to reduce a pest plant's vigour, and impacts over time. Some of the notable biocontrol successes to date include the introduction of agents for tradescantia, ragwort, Californian thistle and moth plant. Once established, these agents continue to suppress pest plant and environmental weed populations across large areas. This delivers benefits for councils, landowners, and communities by improving the health of native ecosystems and productive landscapes.

Looking ahead, a potential future project of significance to the Waikato is biocontrol options for yellow flag iris. By continuing to pool resources and expertise, the collective enables coordinated, smarter, science-based responses to widespread weed challenges.



## Case study

### Putting out the flame

A new biological control agent targeting Chilean flame creeper has recently been approved for release by the Environmental Protection Authority.

The South American leaf-feeding beetle (*Blaptea elguetai*) eats the leaves of Chilean flame creeper, thereby reducing its vigour and impact in areas where it's widespread and challenging to control.

Chilean flame creeper is a significant problem in the Central North Island and in lower regions of the South Island (Otago/Southland). It is part of Waikato Regional Council's eradication management programme, with known infestations on the edge of Pureora.

A climbing plant with coiling tendrils and scarlet flowers, Chilean flamer creeper can smother the vegetation it grows on. Hardy and tolerant of a wide range of conditions, it spreads readily through bird-dispersed seeds and root fragments, allowing infestations to develop and expand rapidly if left unmanaged.

Together with sustained surveillance and control, this new biocontrol agent may provide a useful additional tool to support long-term Chilean flame creeper eradication efforts in the Waikato. Read more: [scoop.co.nz](https://scoop.co.nz)



# Research towards effective eradication of Senegal tea

Waikato Regional Council has commissioned two research projects to help control Senegal tea.

Senegal tea is a pest plant found in seven regions of New Zealand. It's managed as an eradication pest plant in six of the regions, including Waikato, while in Auckland it's part of their progressive containment management programme.

In the Waikato region, there are four actively managed sites. The largest of these is in the lower delta of the Waikato River. Two other sites are considered eradicated. Control is challenging because there is little published information about the effective management of Senegal tea and the control methods used to date have had mixed results.

To help councils tackle this pest plant, the research projects will look at herbicide effectiveness and seedbank longevity.

## Herbicide effectiveness trial

Earth Sciences New Zealand (formerly NIWA) is testing the efficacy of different herbicides and application rates on Senegal tea plants grown in a secure compound.

The plants have been collected and are now being cultivated in containment, with the herbicide trials due to begin in autumn 2027.

They will be monitored for a year to assess how well the different treatments work on the above-ground and below-ground parts of the plant. The results will guide staff on the best herbicide options to use in the field.

## Case study

## Seedbank longevity study

The Bioscience Economy Institute (formerly AgResearch) is researching how long seeds from Senegal tea and nine other pest plants, can survive in the soil. The other species being studied are evergreen buckthorn, knotweed, Mexican feathergrass, mile-a-minute, Nasella tussock, purple loosestrife and velvetleaf.

Seeds will be collected from known infestations or from plants grown in a secure glasshouse, then tested using a Kew Gardens developed protocol for measuring seed longevity. This research will help council determine how long a site needs to be monitored for before it can be confidently declared 'eradicated'.



## Part 3: Whakahaere momo Species management

The following pages provide a summary of the status and progress of the management of each pest species against the key performance indicators and objectives of the Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032 and Biosecurity Operational Plan 2022-2032.

We have operational sites that we actively monitor for pest plant management. Within these operational sites, we may have one or more 'infestation parent points', which are each given a management status. A status may be as follows.

- Treatment: Infestation parent points with live foliage where control work (physical/chemical) was undertaken/treatment applied.
- Interim: Infestation parent points with no present green foliage. NOTE: When an area has no green foliage for more than two consecutive years, it moves to the 'monitored' status. Absence of foliage is assessed twice a year, and if foliage is detected then the area defaults back to treatment status.
- Monitored: Infestation parent points being monitored are those where no green foliage has been present for at least two years and no fewer than 10 consecutive years, so the species is not yet considered to be 'eradicated'. Absence of foliage is assessed annually, and if any foliage is detected the area defaults back to 'treatment' status.
- Eradicated: Infestation parent points where the pest plant has been completely removed, with no live foliage recorded for at least 10 consecutive years (the point at which eradication is achieved, however, this is species specific).

Slight variability in our pest plant data between 2024/25 and 2025/26 is due to infestation sizes reducing for some species, new sites being found, and continual improvement in the quality of data being captured by our data management system, Plantell.



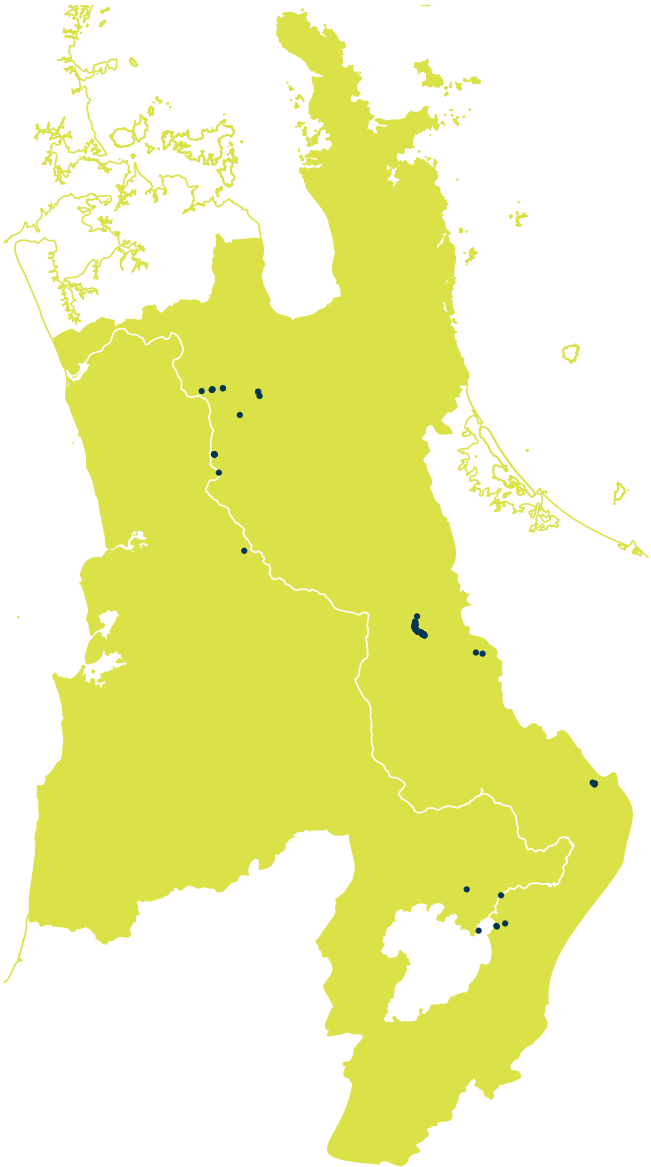
Rabbit.

# African feather grass

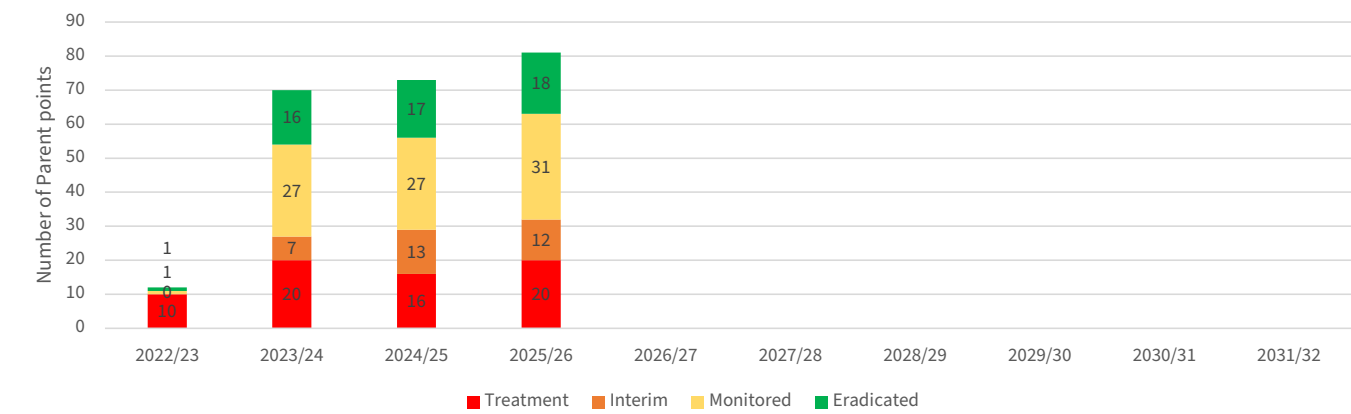
(*Cenchrus macrourus*)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Eradication         | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 20                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Total area of operational sites | 340.8ha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Infestation parent points       | 83                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Pest plant cover                | 217m <sup>2</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Comments                        | <p>The number of operational sites remained unchanged, while the recorded infestation area increased from approximately 70m<sup>2</sup> to 217m<sup>2</sup>. This reflects natural fluctuations in infestation extent, improved Plantell data capture, and detections during ongoing surveillance. The programme achieved all Key Performance Indicators in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i>.</p> |



## African feather grass



# Alligator weed

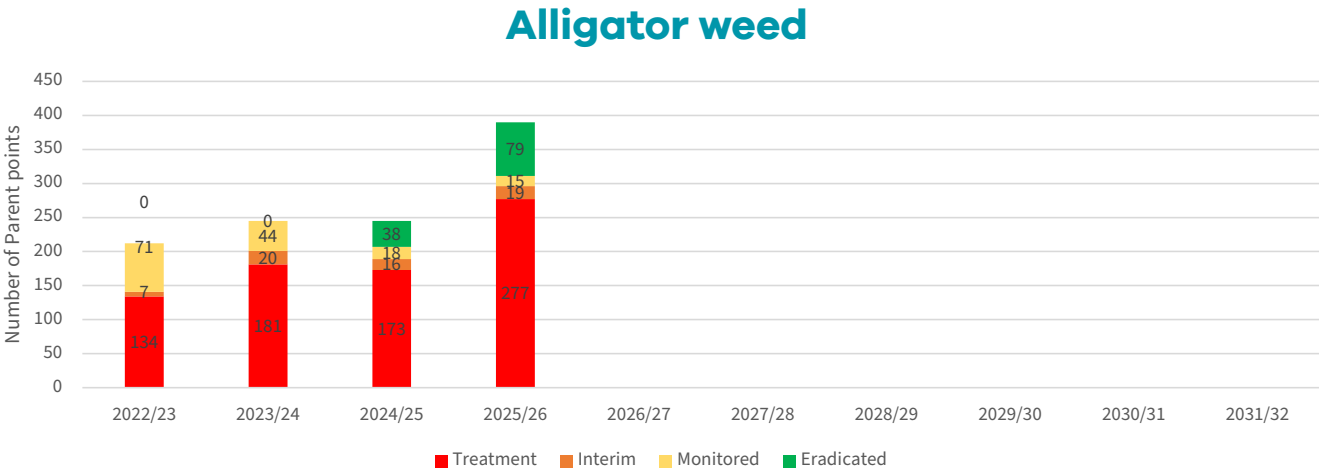
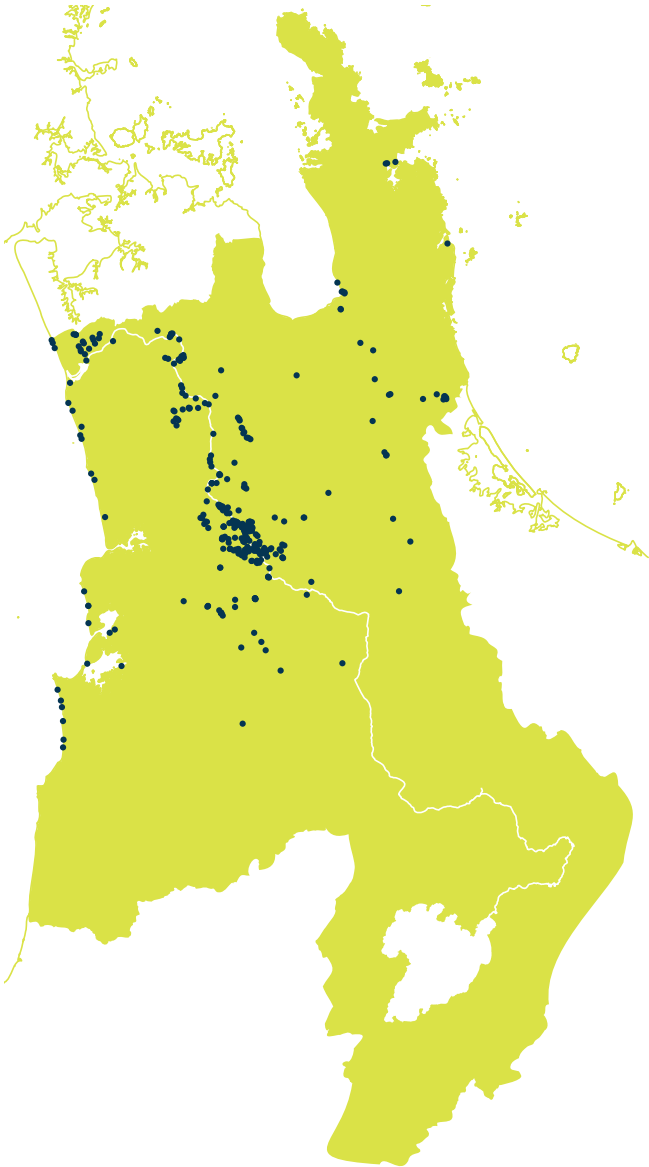
(*Alternanthera philoxeroides*)

| RPMP classification     | Area            | Programme status |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Progressive containment | Whole of region | At risk          |

| Programme summary               | Results    |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| Number of operational sites     | ● 220      |
| Total area of operational sites | ● 24,488ha |
| Infestation parent points       | ● 390      |
| Pest plant cover                | ● 26,929m² |

Comments

Alligator weed remains one of the Waikato region's most significant pest plants. Not all sites received the level of service delivery required this financial year to achieve all Key Performance Indicators in the *Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032*. However, service delivery at high-priority sites met Operational Plan requirements. The recorded infestation area was significantly lower than previous years, largely due to a reduction in the amount of aerial control work at Lake Whangape and Whangamarino, rather than an actual reduction in alligator weed infestation. (*Alligator weed – targeted control along the Ohinemuri River*, page 23 and *Drones deliver smarter pest plant management*, page 46.)

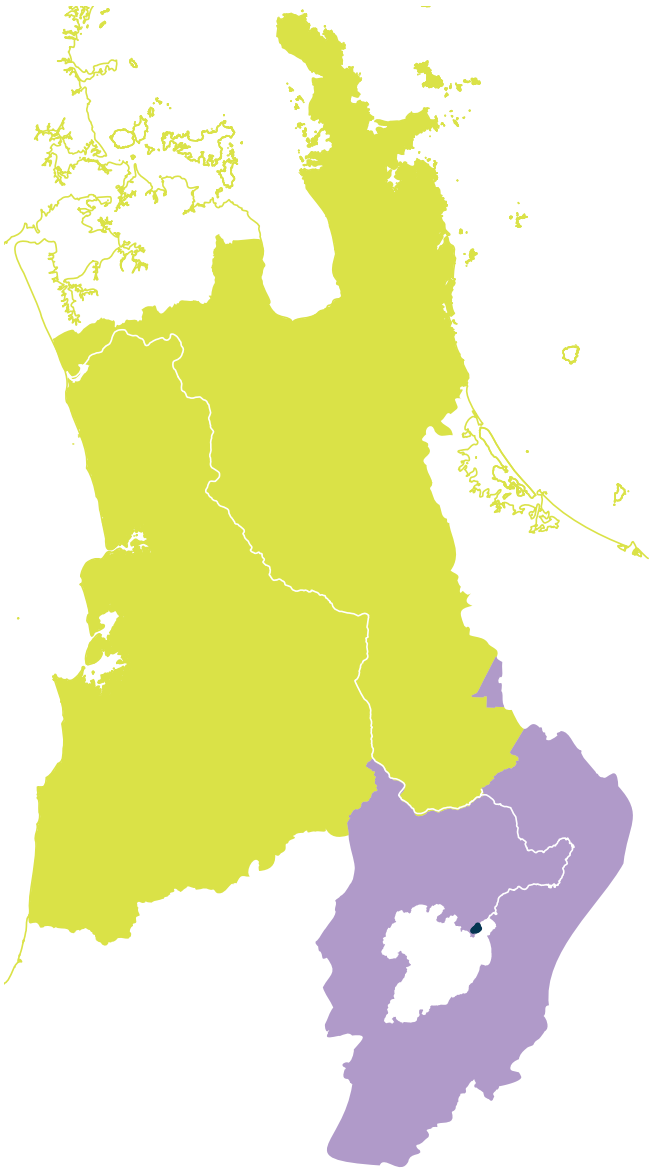
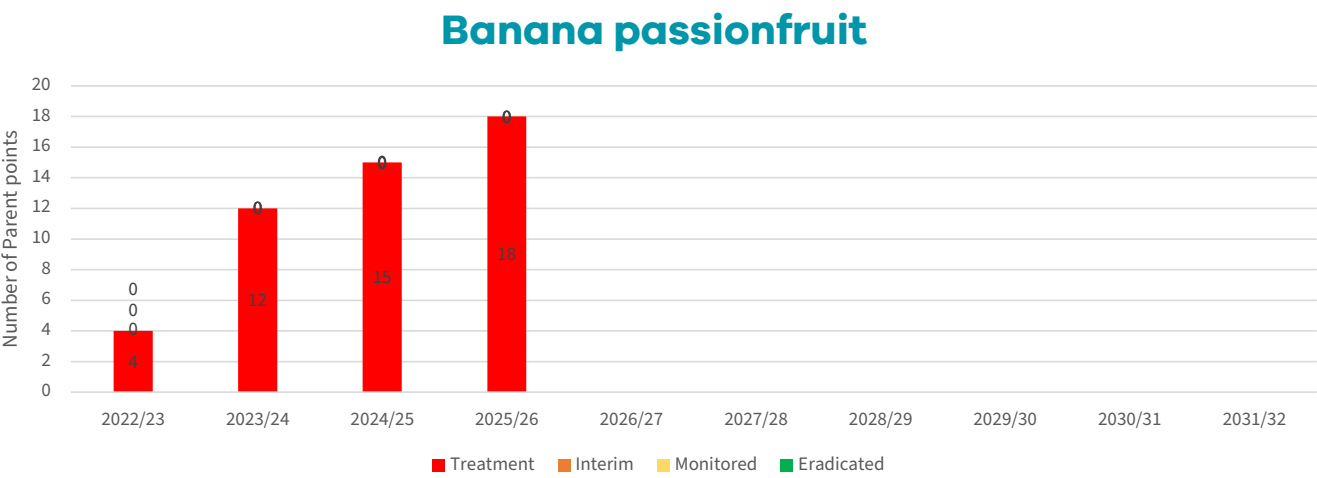


# Banana passionfruit

(Passiflora tripartita)

| RPMP classification     | Area                        | Programme status |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Progressive containment | Taupō and Rotorua districts | On track         |

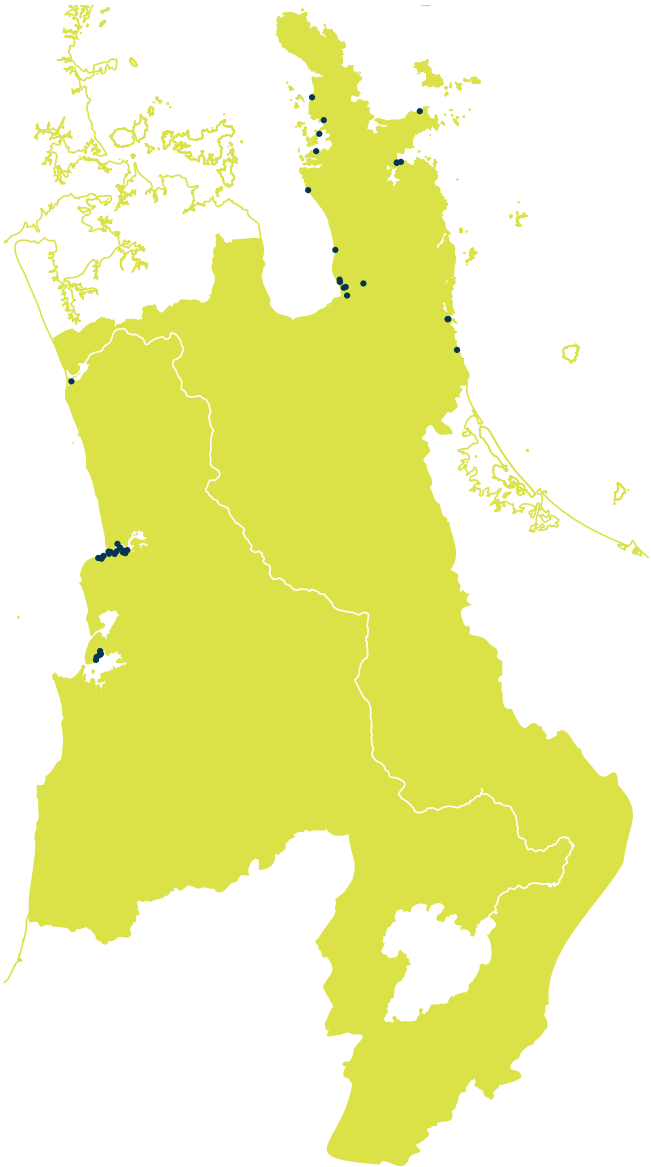
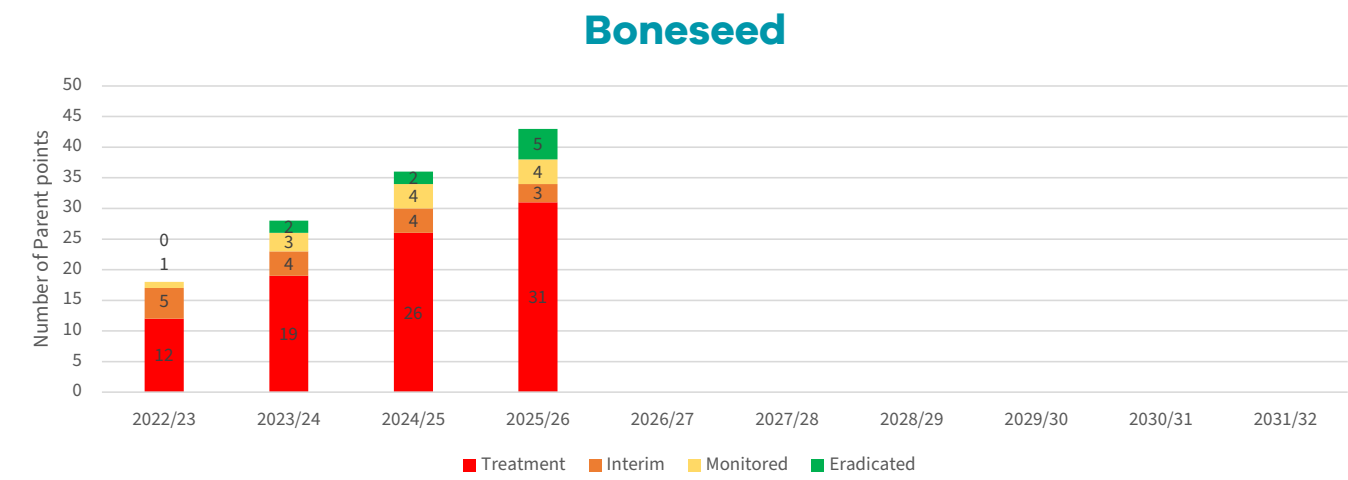
| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 7                                                                                                                      |
| Total area of operational sites | 262ha                                                                                                                  |
| Infestation parent points       | 18                                                                                                                     |
| Pest plant cover                | 143m²                                                                                                                  |
| Comments                        | This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . |



Boneseed

(Chrysanthemoides monilifera)

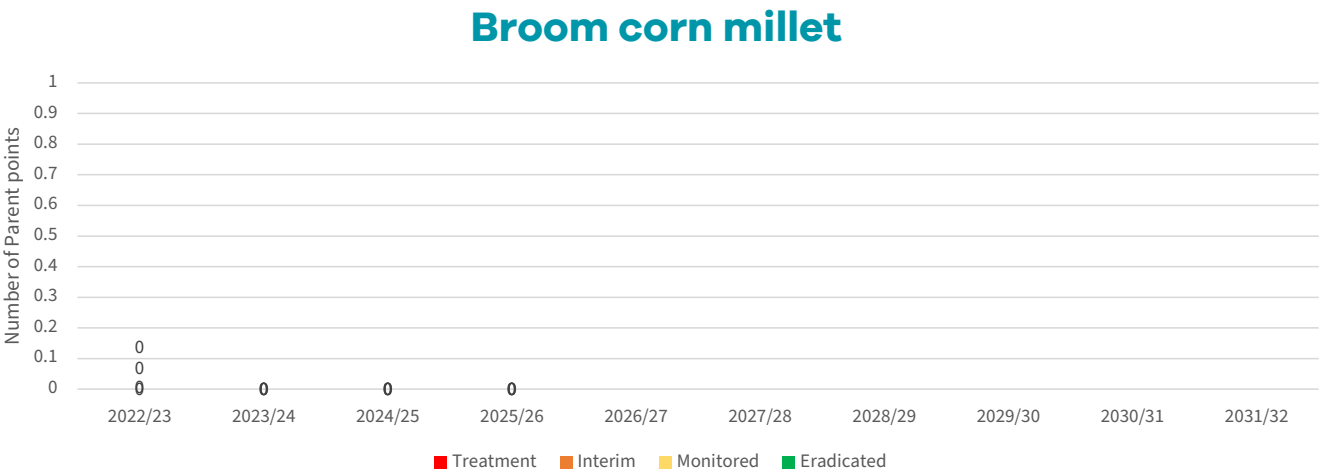
| RPMP classification             | Area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Programme status |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Progressive containment         | Whole of region                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | At risk          |
| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                  |
| Number of operational sites     | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 22               |
| Total area of operational sites | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 1,339ha          |
| Infestation parent points       | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 43               |
| Pest plant cover                | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 206m²            |
| Comments                        | This programme did not achieve all Key Performance Indicators outlined in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . The main contributing factor was reduced staff capacity, which impacted the amount of boneseed surveillance and direct control operations that could be delivered. Consequently, not all scheduled activities were completed. This will be a priority in 2026/27. |                  |



# Broom corn millet

(*Panicum miliaceum*)

| RPMP classification             | Area                                                                                                                   | Programme status |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Exclusion                       | Whole of region                                                                                                        | On track         |
| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                |                  |
| Number of operational sites     | 0                                                                                                                      |                  |
| Total area of operational sites | 0                                                                                                                      |                  |
| Infestation parent points       | 0                                                                                                                      |                  |
| Pest plant cover                | 0                                                                                                                      |                  |
| Comments                        | This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . |                  |

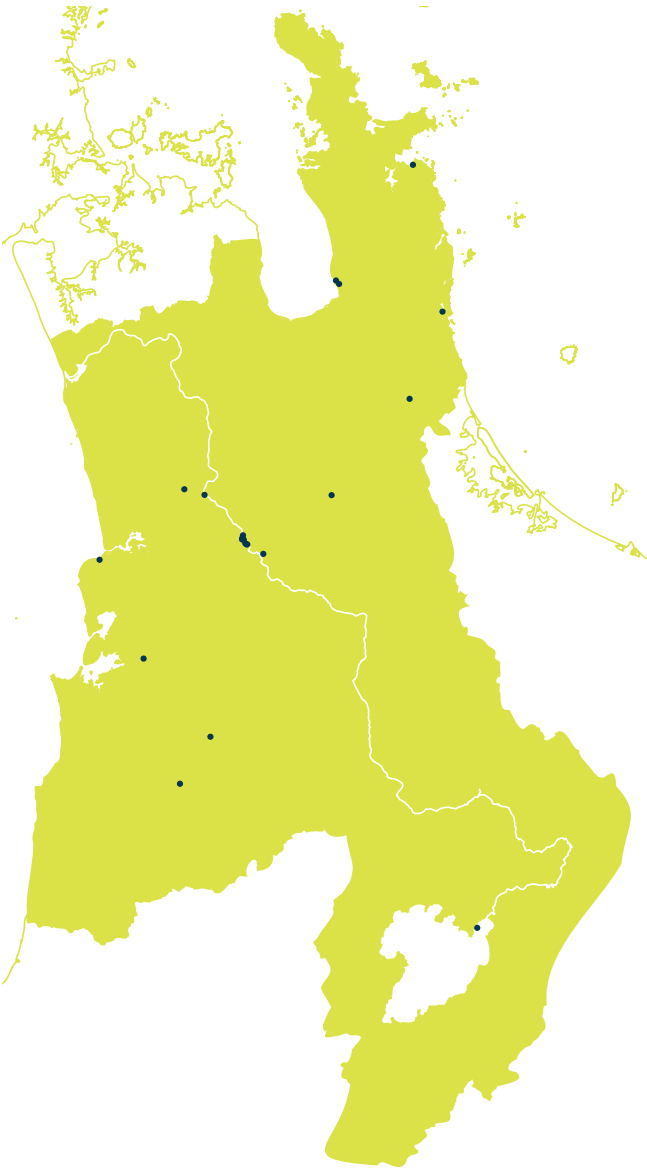
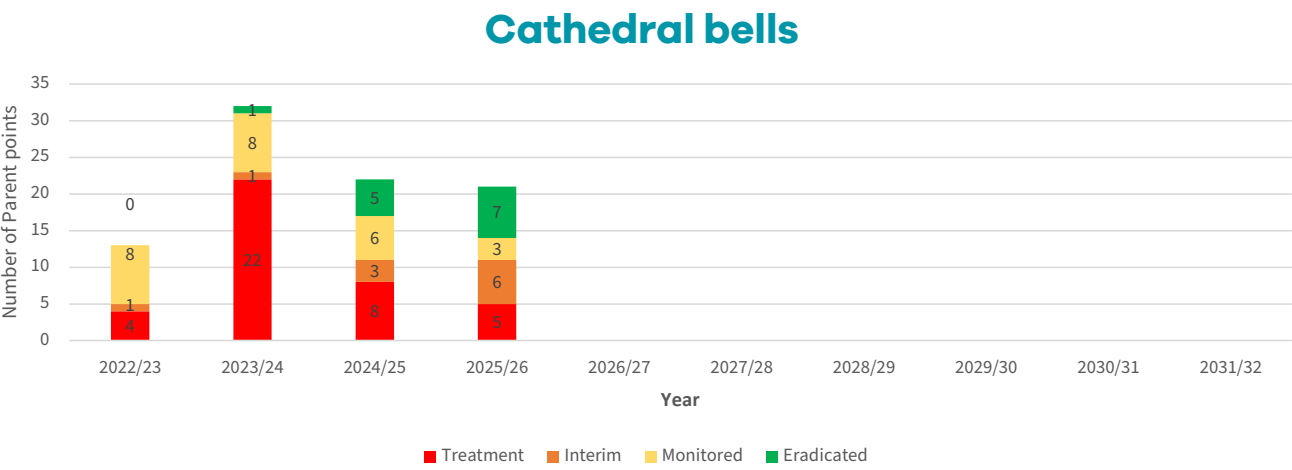


Broom corn millet

# Cathedral bells

(Cobaea scandens)

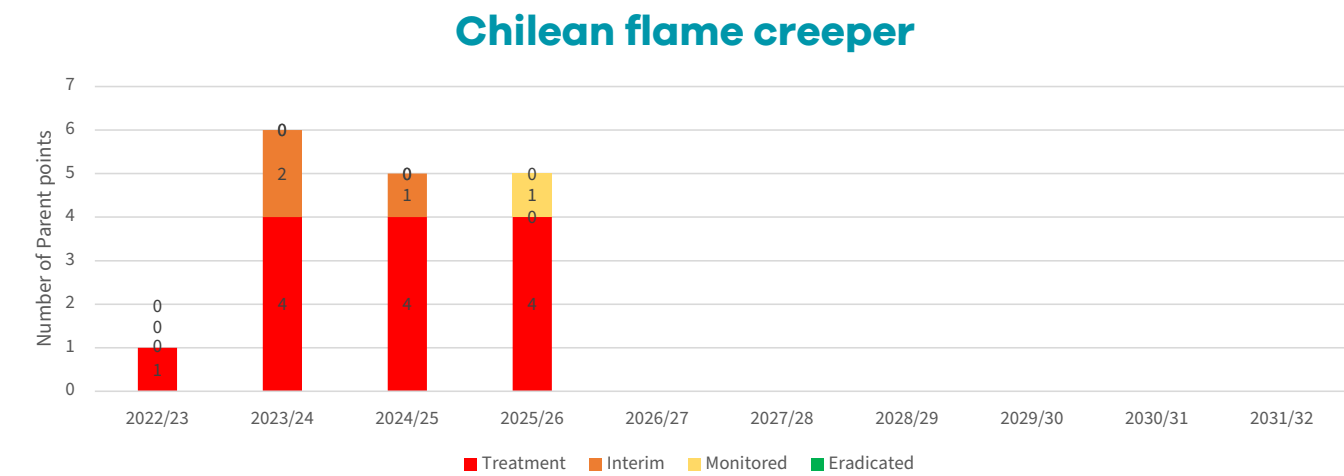
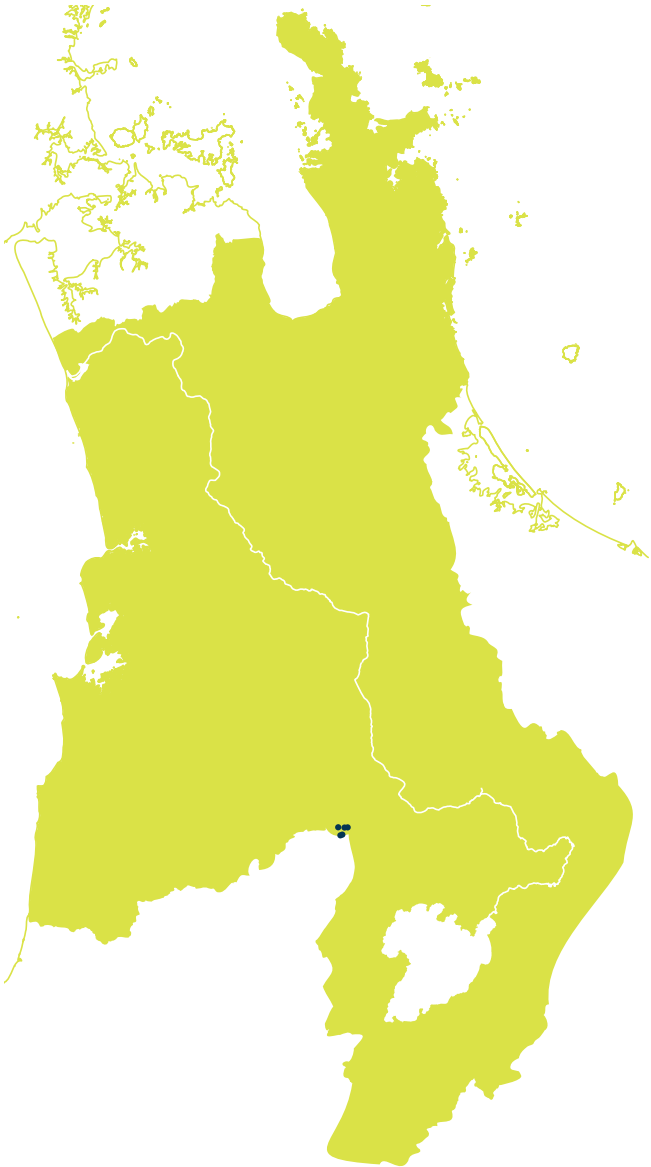
| RPMP classification             | Area                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Programme status |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Eradication                     | Whole of region                                                                                                                                                                                                    | On track         |
| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                  |
| Number of operational sites     | <div><div></div></div> 21                                                                                                                                                                                          |                  |
| Total area of operational sites | <div><div></div></div> 66.6ha                                                                                                                                                                                      |                  |
| Infestation parent points       | <div><div></div></div> 22                                                                                                                                                                                          |                  |
| Pest plant cover                | <div><div></div></div> 16m <sup>2</sup>                                                                                                                                                                            |                  |
| Comments                        | This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . The drop seen this year in infestation parent points are due to a tidy up of historic data. |                  |



# Chilean flame creeper

(*Tropaeolum speciosum*)

| RPMP classification             | Area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Programme status |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Eradication                     | Whole of region                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | At risk          |
| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                  |
| Number of operational sites     | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 5                |
| Total area of operational sites | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 23.4ha           |
| Infestation parent points       | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 5                |
| Pest plant cover                | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 533m²            |
| Comments                        | This programme did not meet all Key Performance Indicators outlined in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> in 2025/26, primarily due to challenges completing all required control. The increase in recorded Chilean flame creeper infestation area reflects improved detection and mapping through drone-assisted surveillance of previously inaccessible areas, rather than a significant expansion of the infestation. A new biocontrol agent for Chilean flame creeper has recently been approved for release. ( <i>Putting out the flame</i> , page 49.) |                  |



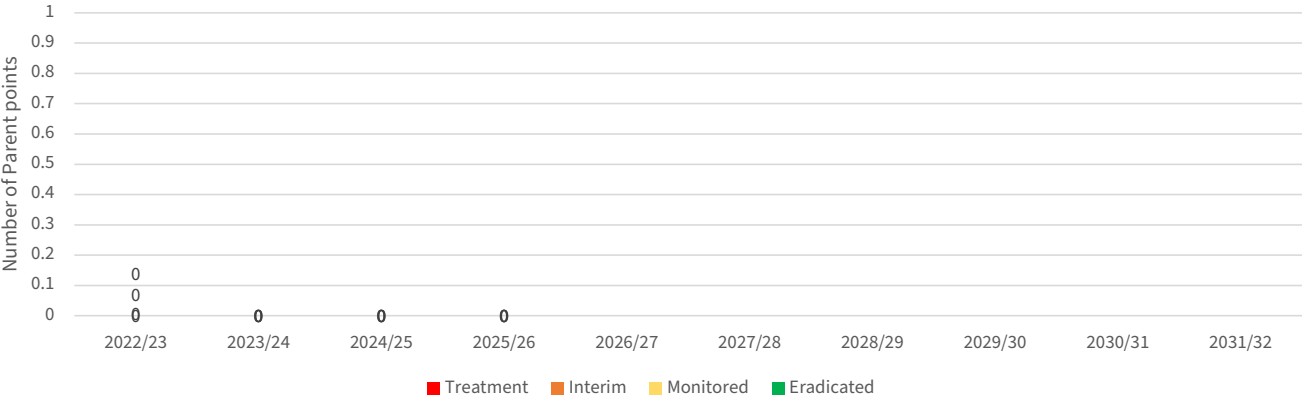
# Chilean needle grass

(*Nassella neesiana*)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Exclusion           | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Total area of operational sites | 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Infestation parent points       | 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Pest plant cover                | 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Comments                        | This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . ( <i>Priority pathways – stopping agricultural pest plants in their tracks, page 12.</i> ) |

## Chilean needle grass



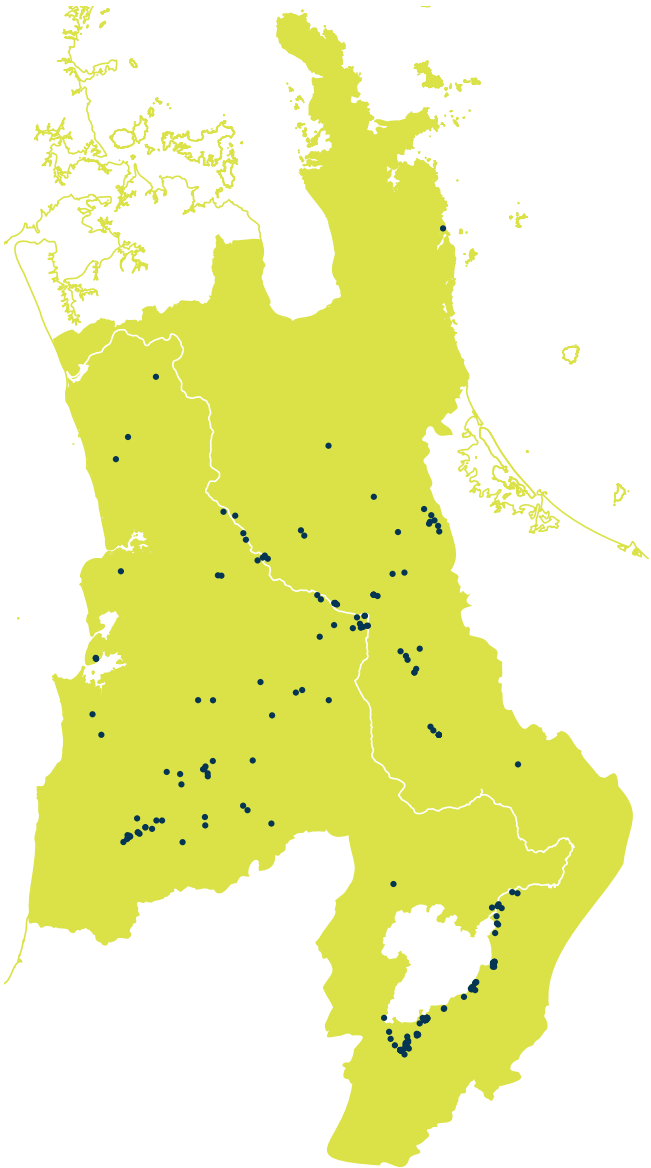
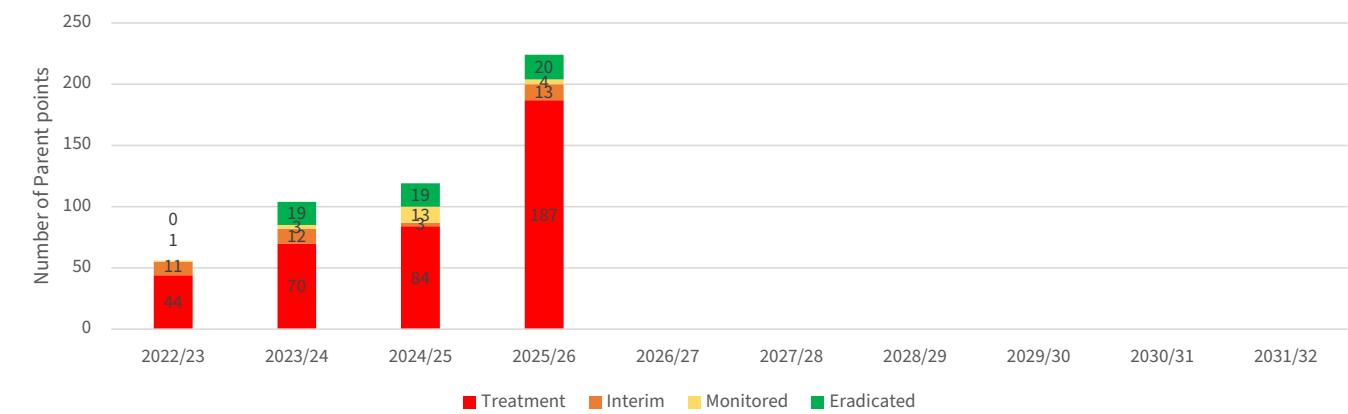
Chilean needle grass

# Climbing spindleberry

(*Celastrus orbicularis*)

| RPMP classification             | Area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Programme status    |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Progressive containment         | Whole of region                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | At risk             |
| Programme summary               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Results             |
| Number of operational sites     | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 120                 |
| Total area of operational sites | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 3,305ha             |
| Infestation parent points       | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 224                 |
| Pest plant cover                | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 3,276m <sup>2</sup> |
| Comments                        | This programme did not achieve all Key Performance Indicators outlined in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . Climbing spindleberry is widely established across numerous sites in the Waikato region, making annual surveillance and control of every site impractical. Consequently, a prioritised approach is used, focusing resources on high priority sites each year. |                     |

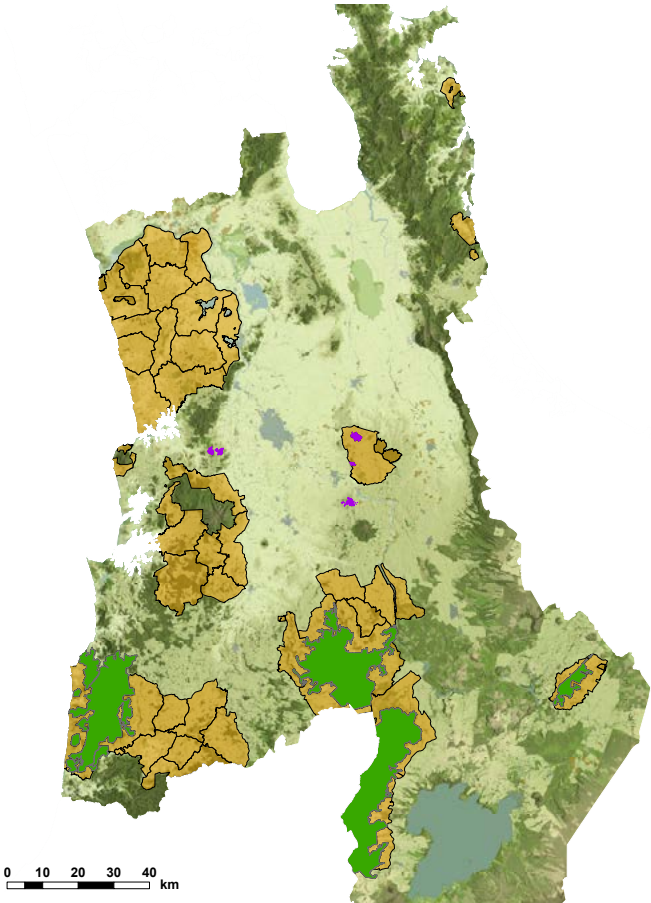
## Climbing spindleberry



# Common brushtail possum

(*Trichosurus vulpecula*)

| RPMP classification                                            | Area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Programme status |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Sustained control                                              | Priority Possum Control Areas (PPCA)<br>Whole of region – Good Neighbour Rule                                                                                                                                                                                                           | On track         |
| Programme summary                                              | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                  |
| Number of enquiries/complaints received                        | <div>● IRIS enquiries – 20</div> <div>● IRIS complaints – 1</div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                  |
| Number of properties requiring Good Neighbour Rule enforcement | <div>● None required.</div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                  |
| PPCA & HALO areas controlled                                   | <div>● 132,716ha</div> <div>● PPCA – 16 council control operations, 3 collaborative operations</div> <div>● Hamilton HALO – 617ha, 3 control operations</div>                                                                                                                           |                  |
| Number of operations that met RTC or RTI' targets              | 96% of control operations completed, met or were well below their RTC/RTI performance targets.                                                                                                                                                                                          |                  |
| Comments                                                       | This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . ( <i>Nukuhakari-Awakino – collective mahi for healthier, resilient catchments, page 40, and Maintaining gains in the Tongariro-Turangi catchment, page 43.</i> ) |                  |

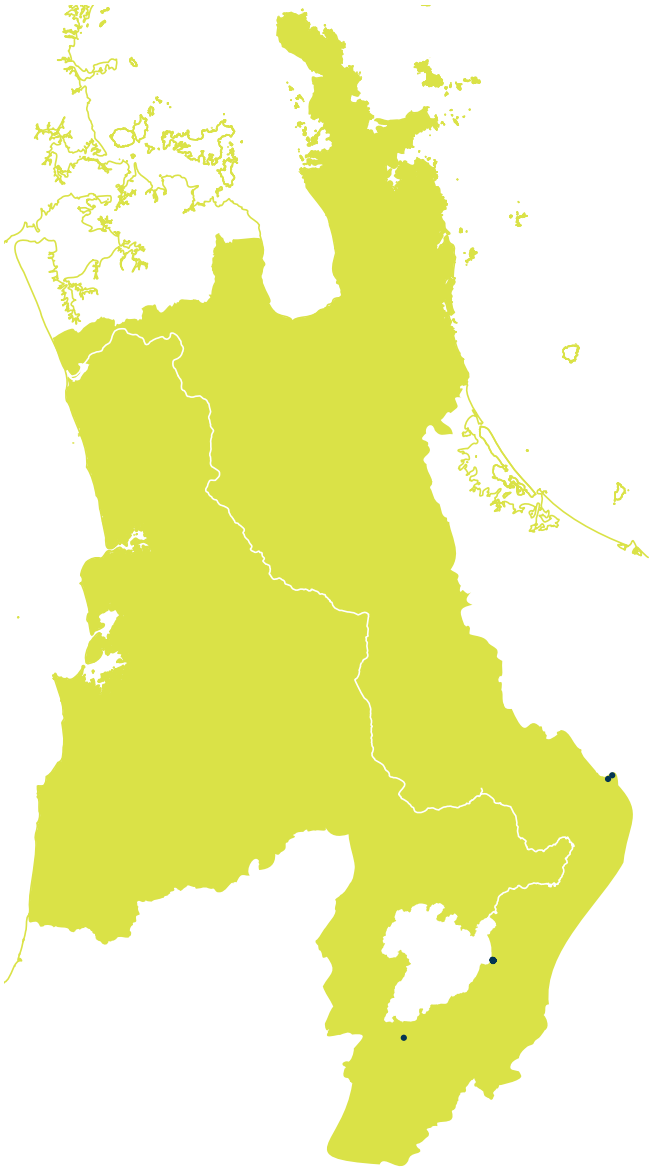
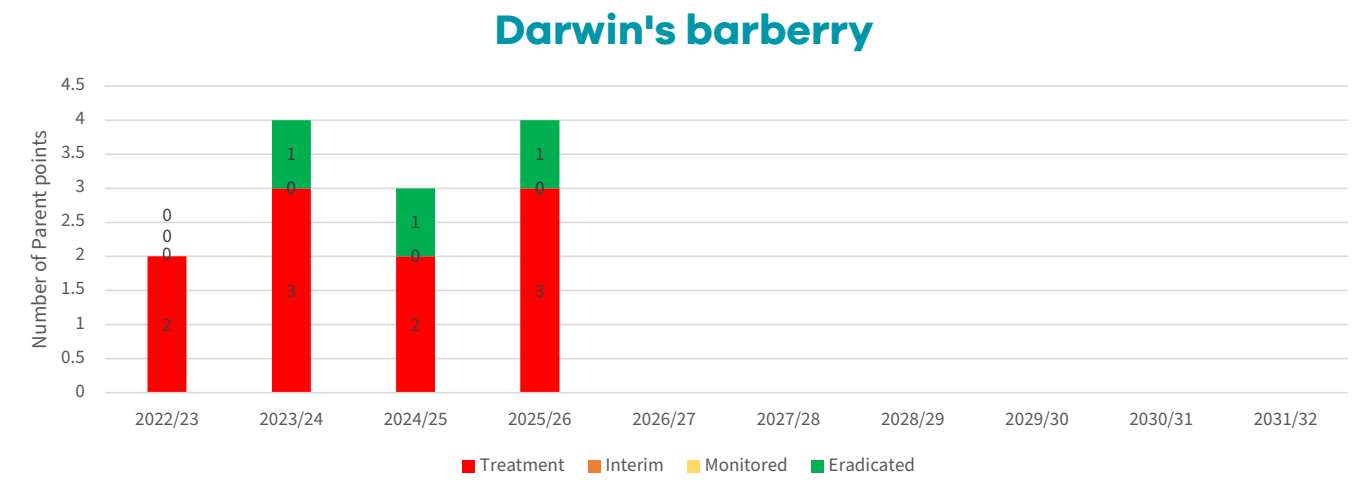


PPCA and HALO sites

Darwin's barberry

(Berberis darwinii)

| RPMP classification             | Area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Programme status |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Progressive containment         | Whole of region                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | At risk          |
| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                  |
| Number of operational sites     | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 3                |
| Total area of operational sites | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 2,857ha          |
| Infestation parent points       | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 4                |
| Pest plant cover                | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 28m <sup>2</sup> |
| Comments                        | This programme did not achieve all Key Performance Indicators outlined in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . Contractor availability affected the delivery of planned work during the year. In addition, a substantial amount of control undertaken by forestry companies is not reflected in programme records, and difficult access to one site has constrained monitoring efforts, resulting in less complete infestation data. |                  |

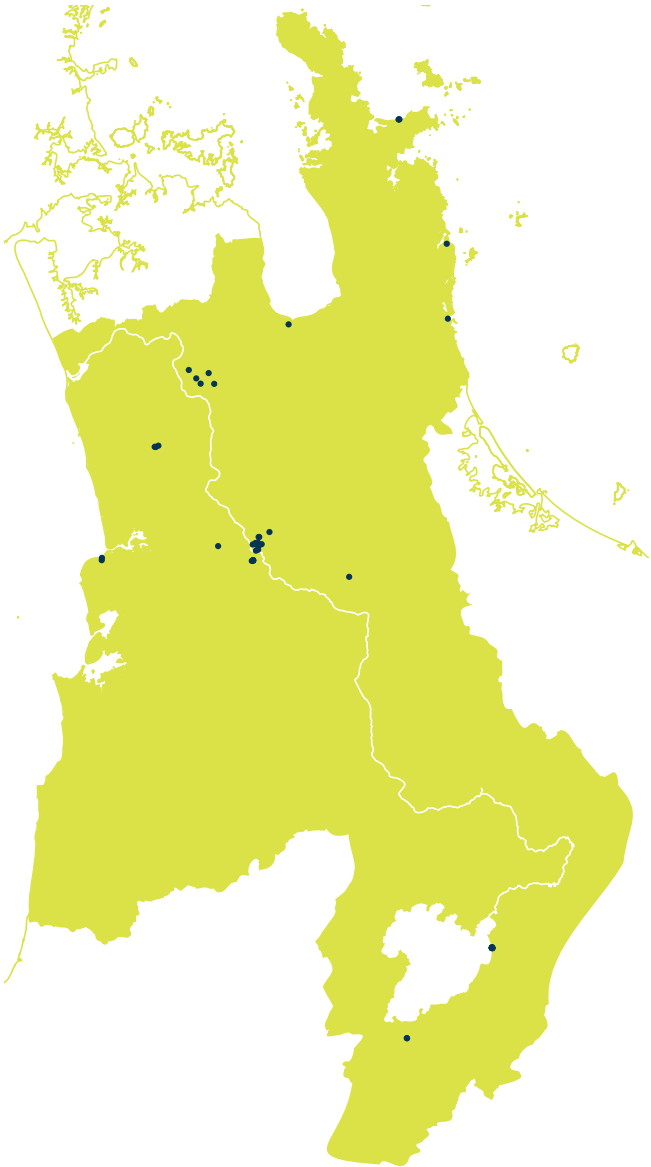
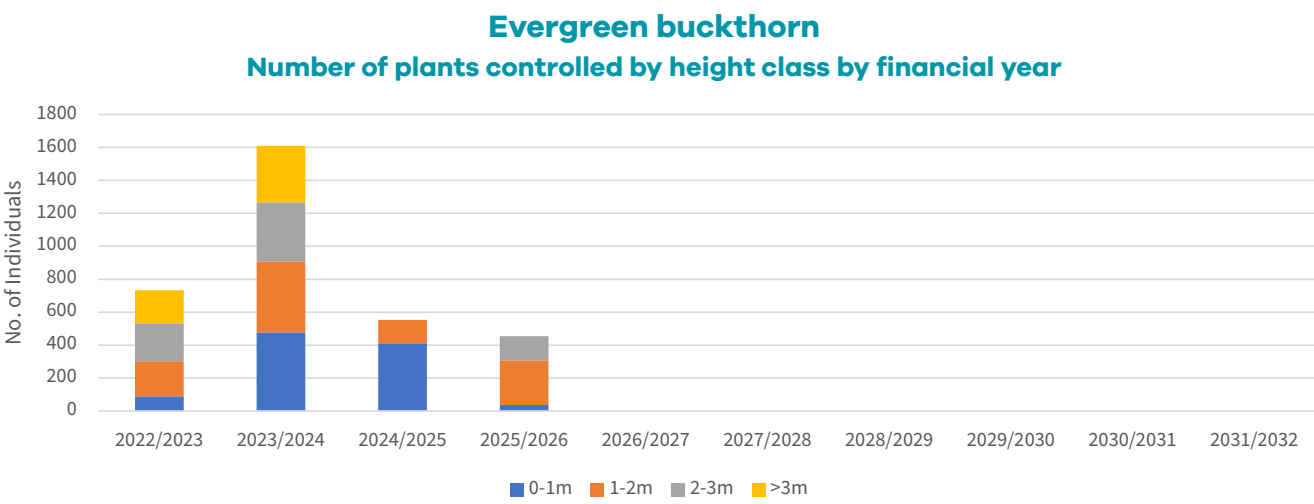


# Evergreen buckthorn

(*Rhamnus alaternus*)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Eradication         | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 4,337                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Total area of operational sites | 14,032ha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Total plants controlled         | 455                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Comments                        | <p>Most evergreen buckthorn surveillance and control activities were undertaken in Hamilton city, the lower Waikato, and the Coromandel Peninsula, with new sites also identified in the Taupō area. Infestation data is recorded using size classes. The programme successfully met all Key Performance Indicators outlined in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i>. (<i>Towards eradication of evergreen buckthorn from Whangamatā, page 17.</i>)</p> |

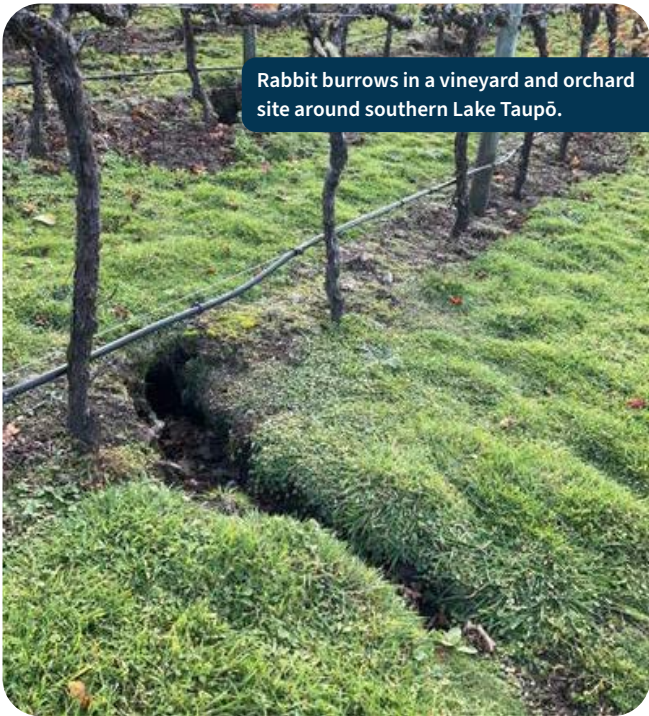


# Feral rabbit

(*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Sustained control   | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary                       | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of enquiries/complaints received | <div></div> IRIS enquiries – 21                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|                                         | <div></div> IRIS complaints – 2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Site inspections undertaken             | <div></div> 3 private properties                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                         | <div></div> 15 TDC reserves                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Enforcement actions taken               | <div></div> None required                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Service delivery undertaken             | <div></div> None required                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Comments                                | <p>This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The council’s Rabbit Site Assessment Tool was utilised when undertaking site inspections.</li><li>• Awareness and education material was sent out or delivered to landowners in areas where high feral rabbit numbers were observed during the site inspections.</li><li>• Council liaised with DOC and Taupō District Council on this year’s rabbit surveillance and control work to meet their good neighbour obligations under the RPMP.</li><li>• Support and advice was provided to the Omori-Kuratau Ratepayers Association (OKRA) as they continued to tackle the feral rabbit issue in their area and investigated future community-led rabbit control options in conjunction with this council, TDC and DOC.</li></ul> |



Rabbit burrows in a vineyard and orchard site around southern Lake Taupō.



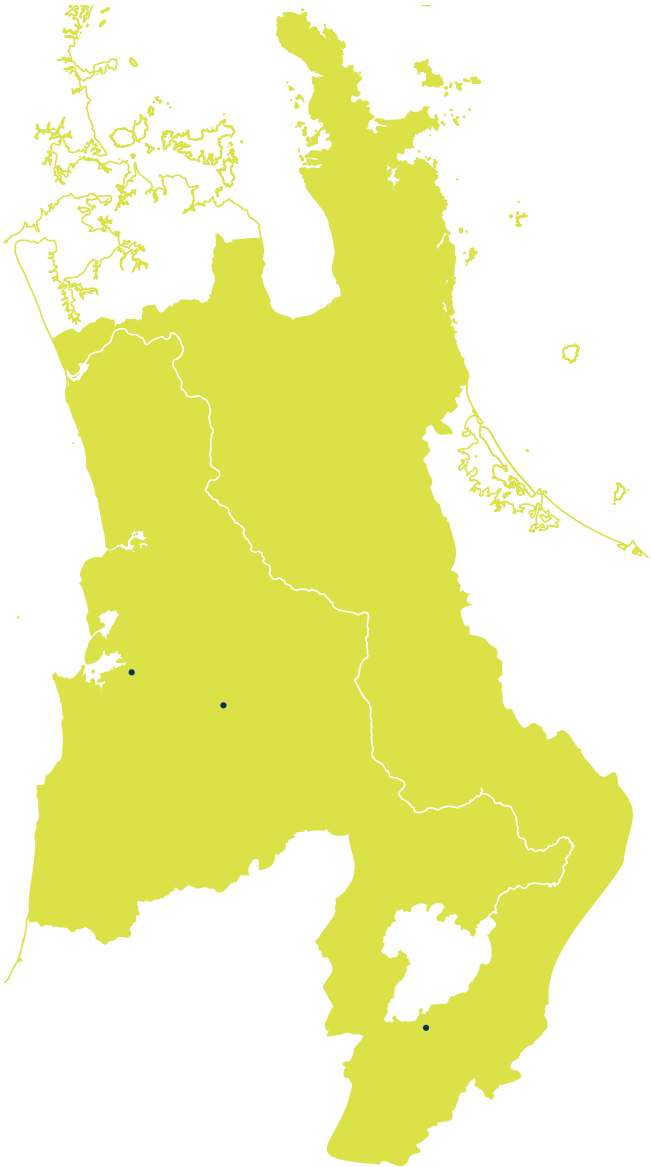
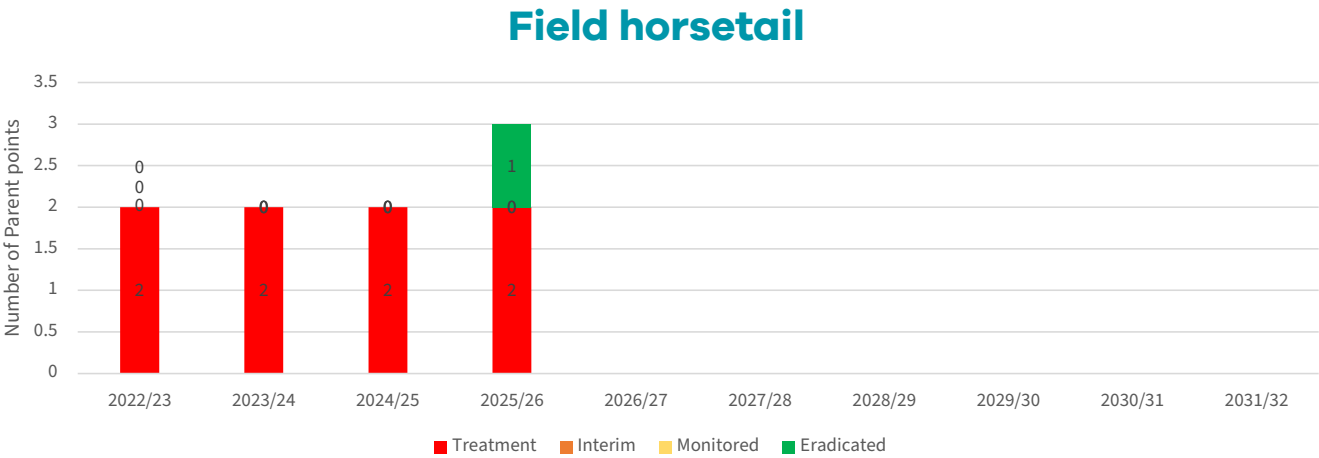
Rabbit app

# Field horsetail

(*Equisetum arvense*)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Exclusion           | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Total area of operational sites | 0.7ha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Total infestation parent points | 3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Pest plant cover                | 3.2m²                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Comments                        | <p>The two known field horsetail sites in the region are still being actively managed, with biannual surveillance and control of any plants located towards the goal of eradication. The other site is considered eradication.</p> <p>This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i>.</p> |

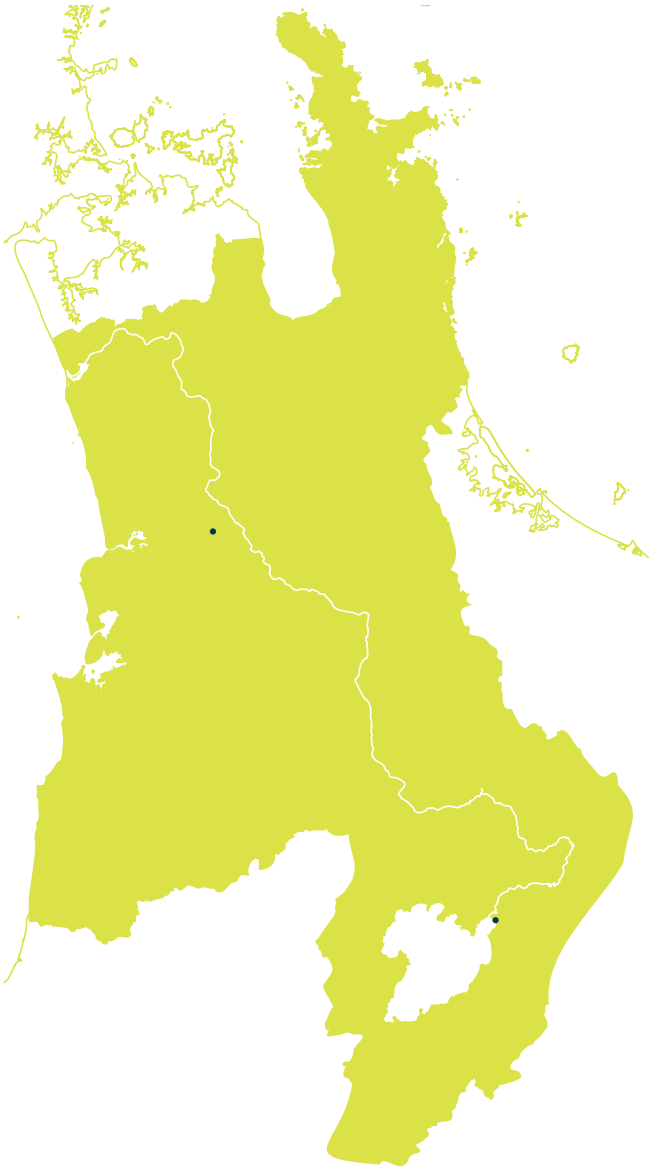
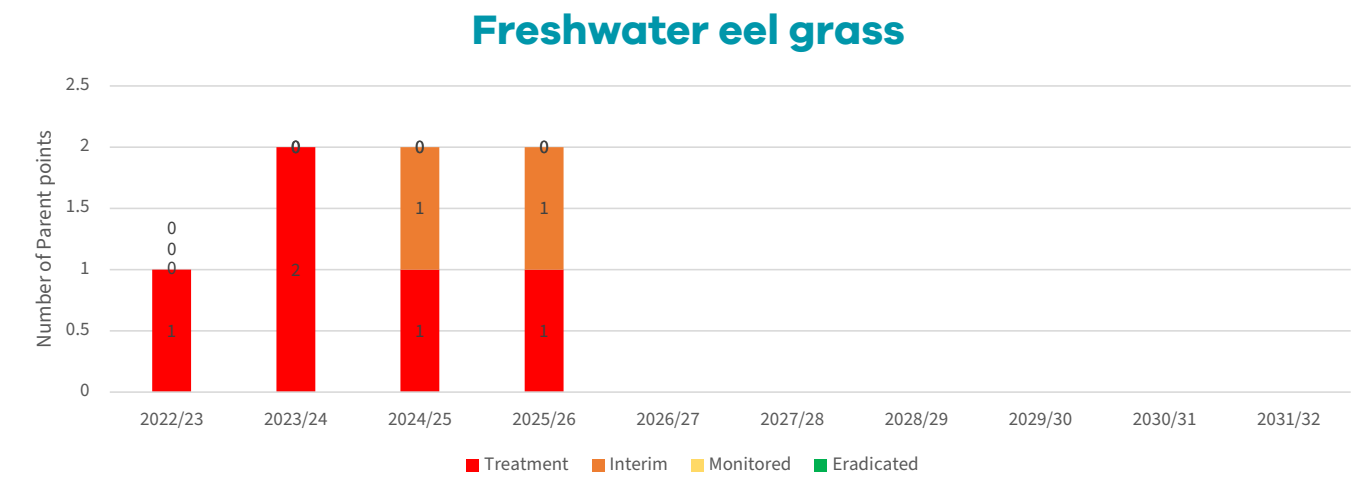


# Freshwater eel grass

(*Vallisneria australis*)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Exclusion           | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 2                                                                                                                      |
| Total area of operational sites | 0.2ha                                                                                                                  |
| Infestation parent points       | 2                                                                                                                      |
| Pest plant cover                | 0m²                                                                                                                    |
| Comments                        | This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . |



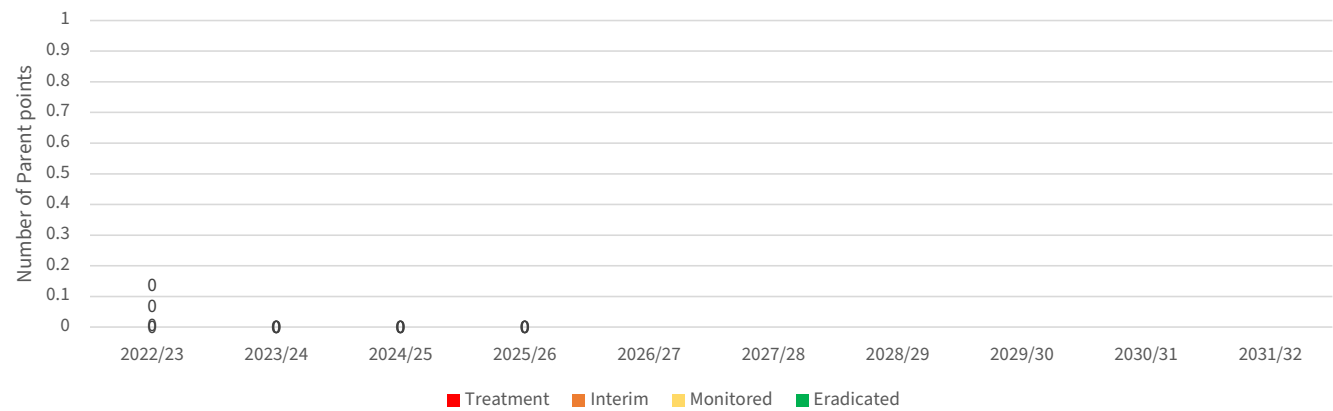
# Fringed water lily

(*Nymphoides peltata*)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Exclusion           | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 0                                                                                                                      |
| Total area of operational sites | 0                                                                                                                      |
| Total infestation parent points | 0                                                                                                                      |
| Pest plant cover                | 0                                                                                                                      |
| Comments                        | This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . |

## Fringed water lily

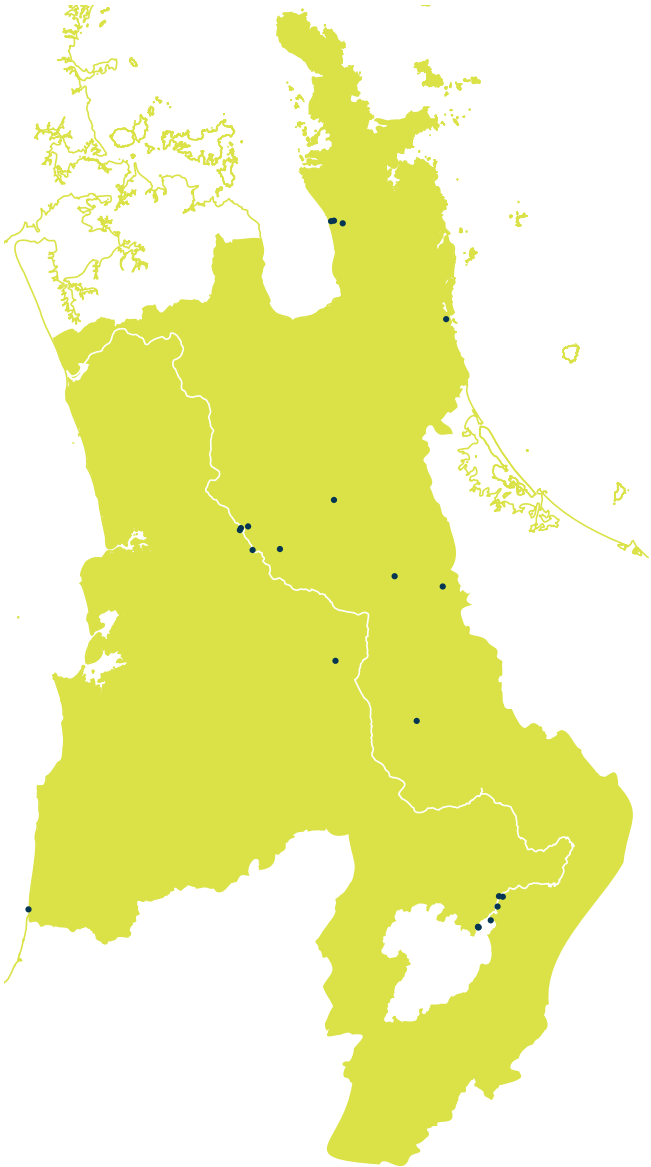
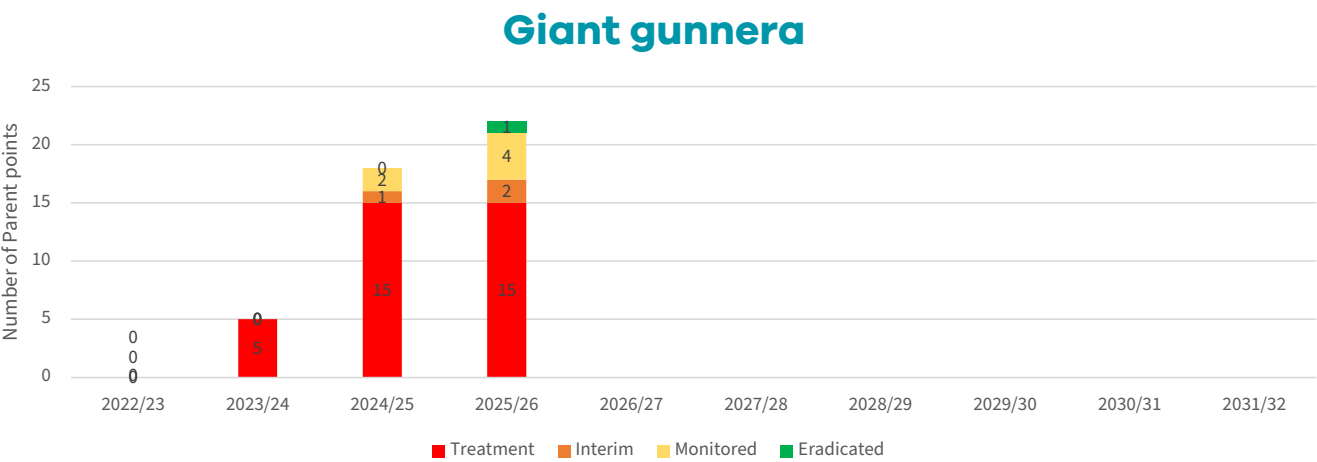


# Giant gunnera

(*Gunnera tinctoria*, *Gunnera manicata*)

| RPMP classification     | Area            | Programme status |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Progressive containment | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 6                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Total area of operational sites | 11ha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Total infestation parent points | 22                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Pest plant cover                | 4m²                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Comments                        | <p>Five new giant gunnera sites were identified this year through proactive, targeted surveillance. A significant amount of control work is undertaken by landowners and is not captured in programme summary data, meaning recorded infestation levels may not fully reflect on-the-ground management efforts.</p> <p>Further targeted surveillance is required to locate and assess any additional sites and achieve all Key Performance Indicators outlined in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i>.</p> |

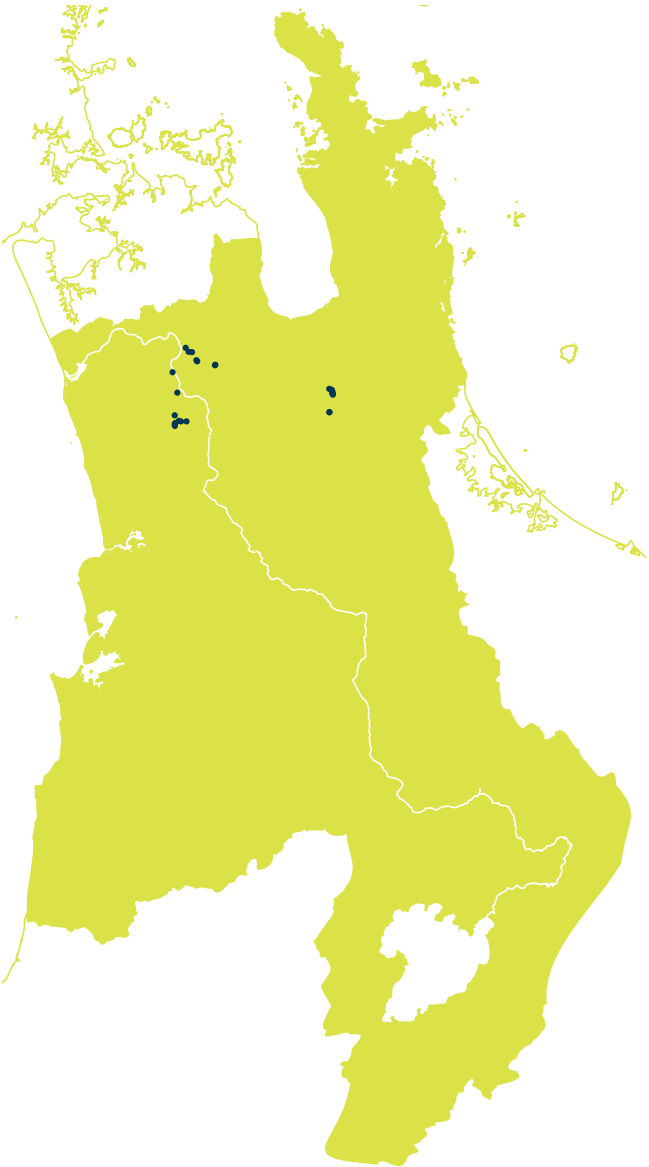
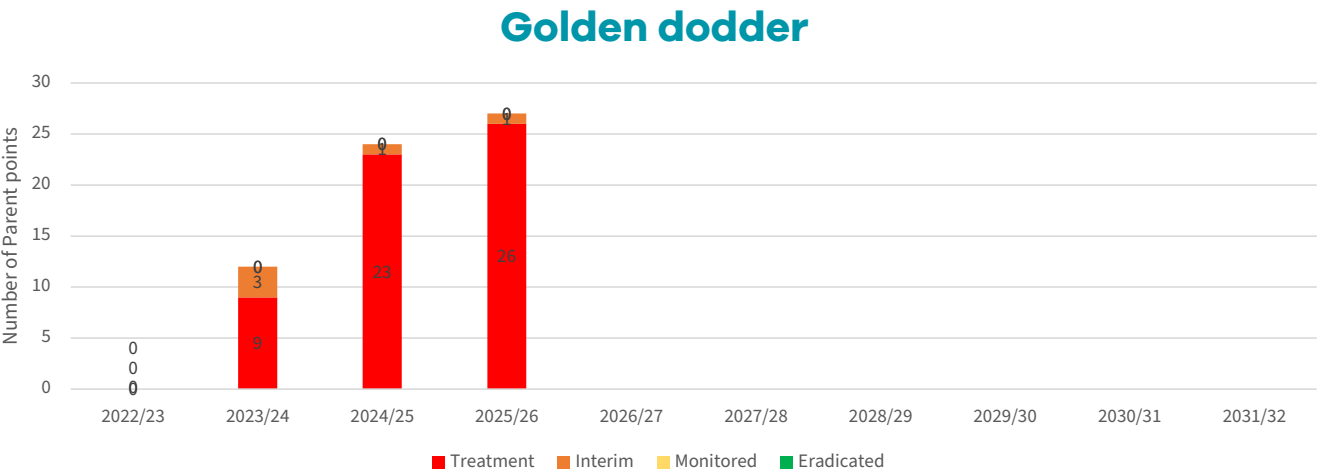


# Golden dodder

(*Cuscuta campestris*)

| RPMP classification     | Area            | Programme status |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Progressive containment | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | <div></div> 29                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Total area of operational sites | <div></div> 935ha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Total infestation parent points | <div></div> 27                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Pest plant cover                | <div></div> 3,861m²                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Comments                        | The council worked closely with DOC to identify and manage golden dodder sites again in 2025/26, ensuring that surveillance and control activities were delivered effectively. This collaborative approach enabled the programme to meet all Key Performance Indicators outlined in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> in the new financial year. |

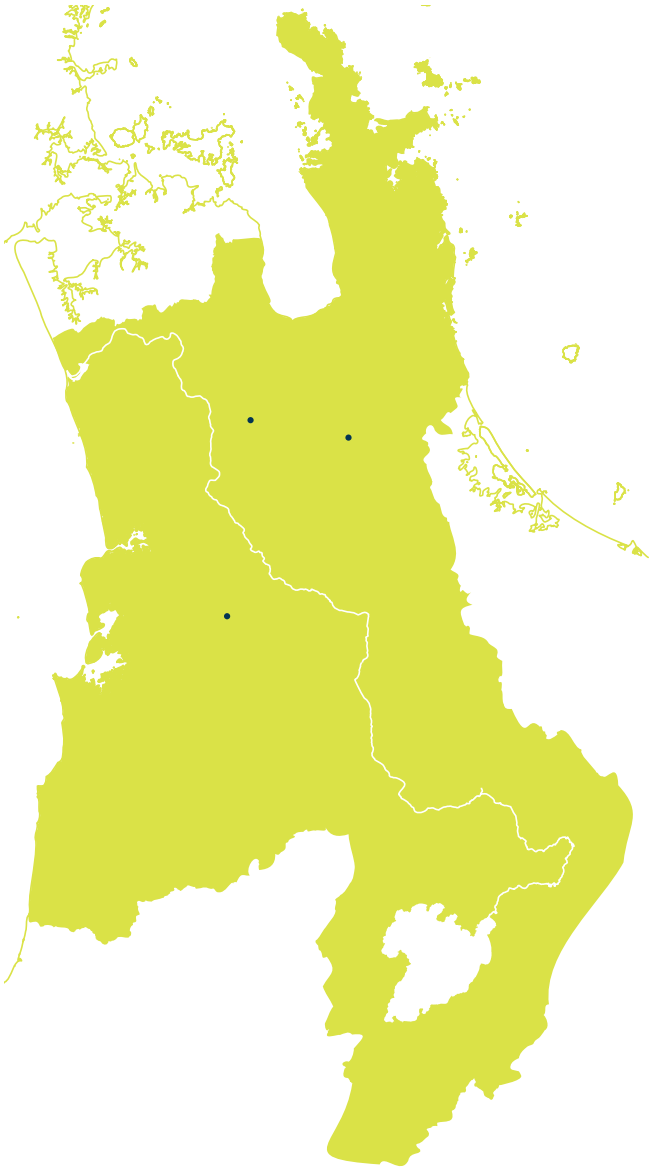
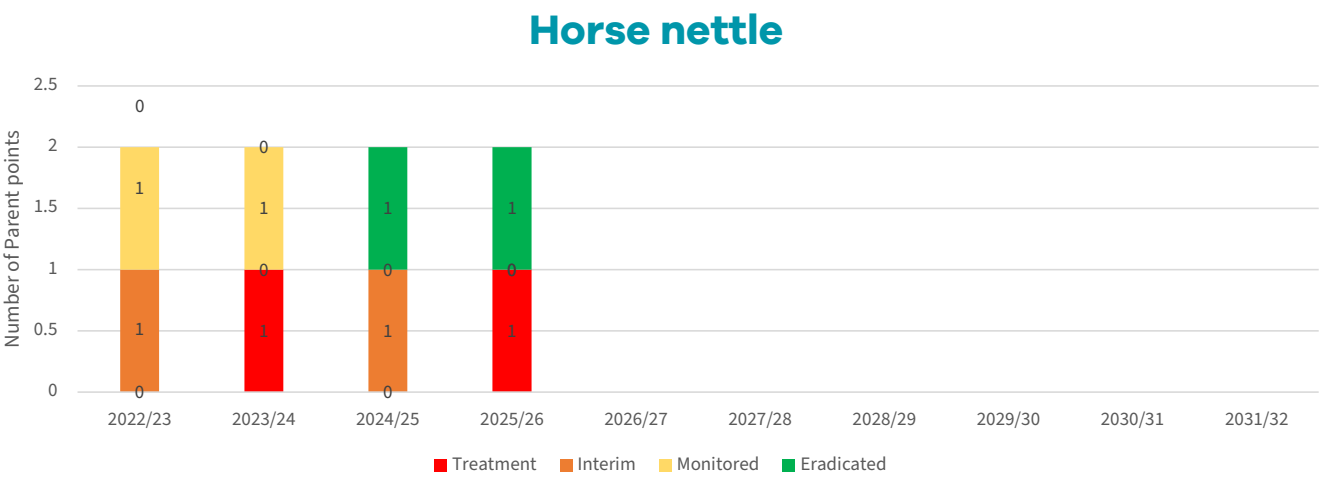


# Horse nettle

(*Solanum carolinense*)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Eradication         | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 2                                                                                                                      |
| Total area of operational sites | 40ha                                                                                                                   |
| Total infestation parent points | 2                                                                                                                      |
| Pest plant cover                | 4m²                                                                                                                    |
| Comments                        | This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . |

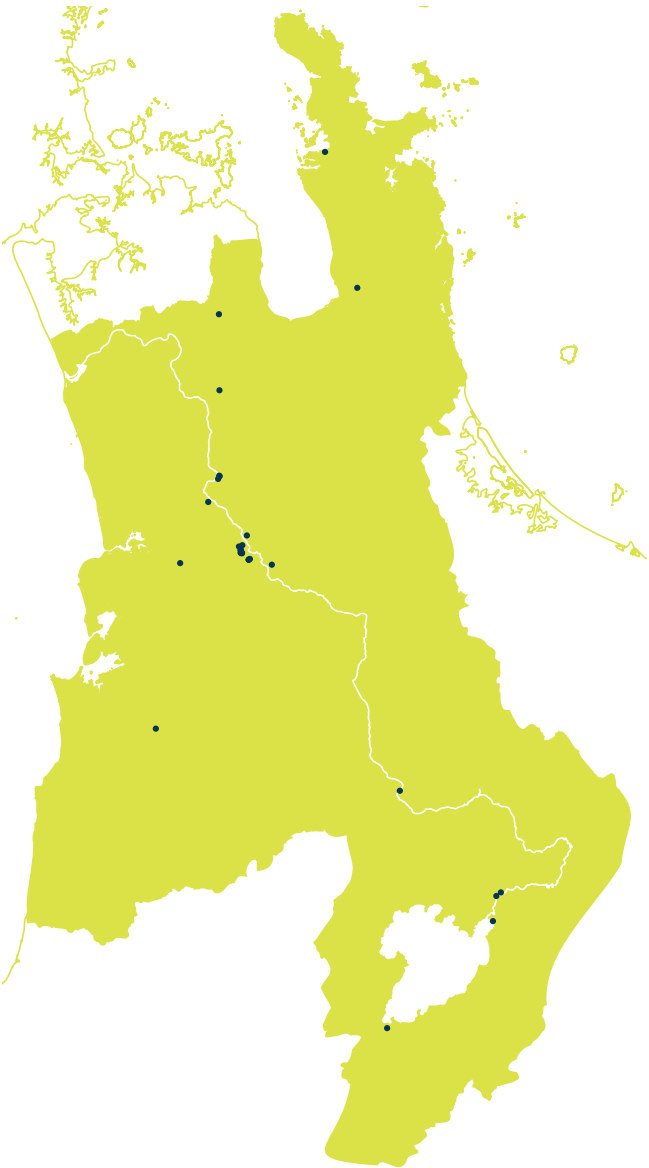
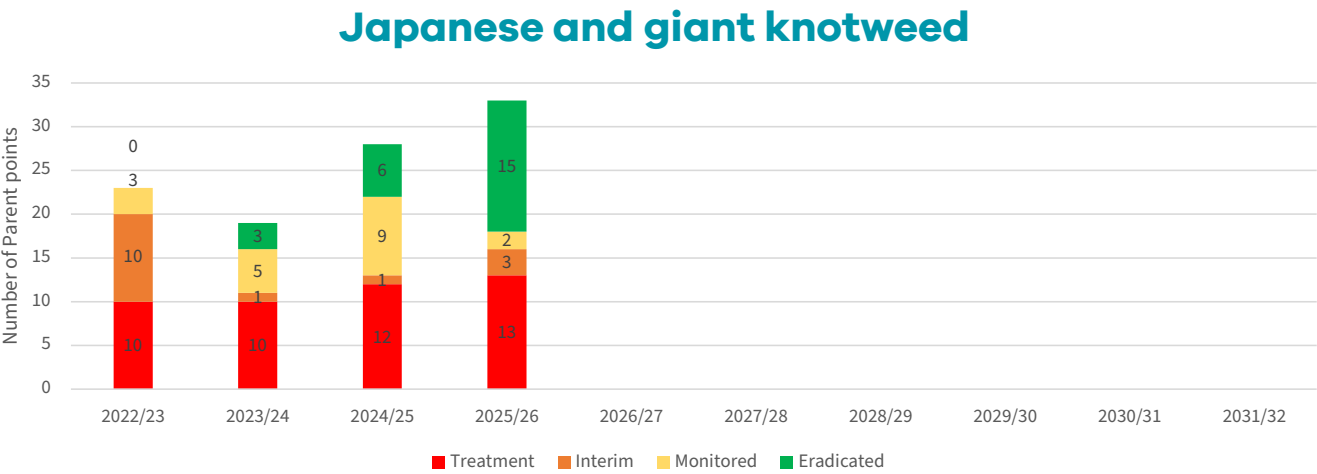


# Knotweed (giant and Japanese/Asiatic knotweed)

(Fallopia sachalinensis and Fallopia japonica)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Eradication         | Whole of region | On track         |

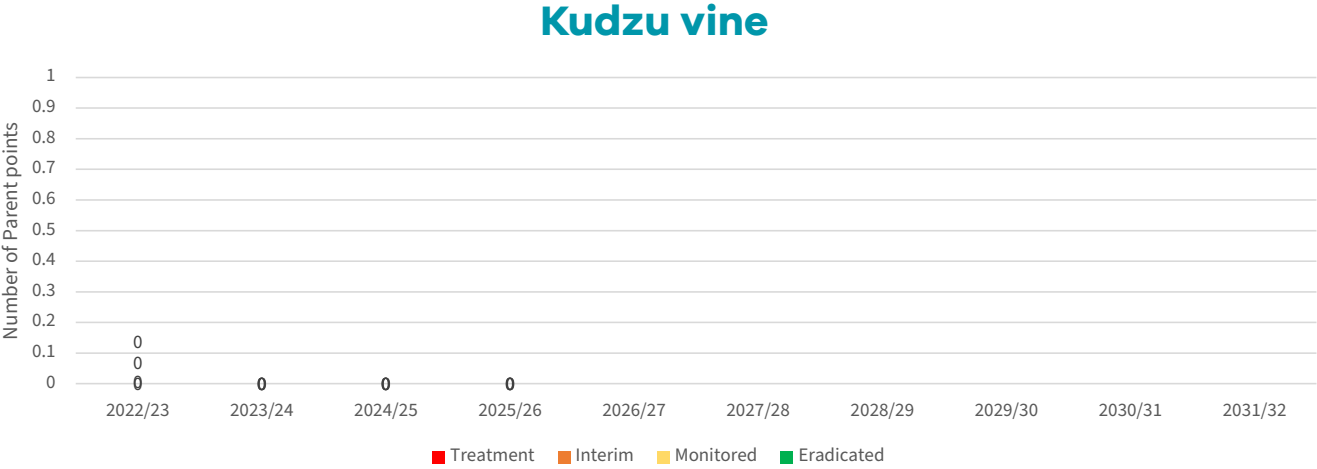
| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 26                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Total area of operational sites | 31ha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Total infestation parent points | 34                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Pest plant cover                | 231m²                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Comments                        | <p>This programme met all Key Performance Indicators outlined in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i>. The increase in parent points reflects successful control outcomes, improved surveillance of historic sites resulting in more accurate data, and the identification of a new site of Japanese knotweed. (<i>Giant knotweed ‘eradicated’ from Waikato, page 16.</i>)</p> |



# Kudzu vine

(*Pueraria lobata*)

| RPMP classification             | Area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Programme status |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Exclusion                       | Whole of region                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | On track         |
| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                  |
| Number of operational sites     | 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                  |
| Total area of operational sites | 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                  |
| Total infestation parent points | 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                  |
| Pest plant cover                | 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                  |
| Comments                        | <p>With infestations of this vigorous, invasive vine present in the Auckland region and western Bay of Plenty vigilance in the Waikato is required to ensure it doesn't establish here.</p> <p>This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i>.</p> |                  |



Kudzu vine flowers

# Magpie

(*Gymnorhina tibicen*)

| RPMP classification | Area                           | Programme status |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Sustained control   | Whole of region (human health) | On track         |

| Programme summary                        | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of enquiries/ complaints received | IRIS enquiries – 6<br>IRIS complaints – 10                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Site visits undertaken                   | 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Verbal requests for action made          | 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Enforcement actions taken                | 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Service delivery undertaken              | 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Comments                                 | Public safety concerns for magpie relate to swooping behaviours during the breeding season.<br>Occupiers are responsible for control. The council provides advice and information to landowners to support control of magpies where they are nesting and causing a threat to human health and safety.<br>Some city and district councils have magpie trapping programmes and install warning signage during spring. |

Magpies are extremely territorial mainly during spring (August to October) when the males actively defend their territory and protect their young. They can be a nuisance during this time, mostly via their swooping, especially towards people who pass near to where they are nesting.

To avoid being swooped choose an alternative route away from any nests, stay calm and keep moving if you see a magpie approaching. Protect your head with an umbrella, hat or helmet. If you're on a bike, dismount and walk the bike quickly out of the magpie's territory.

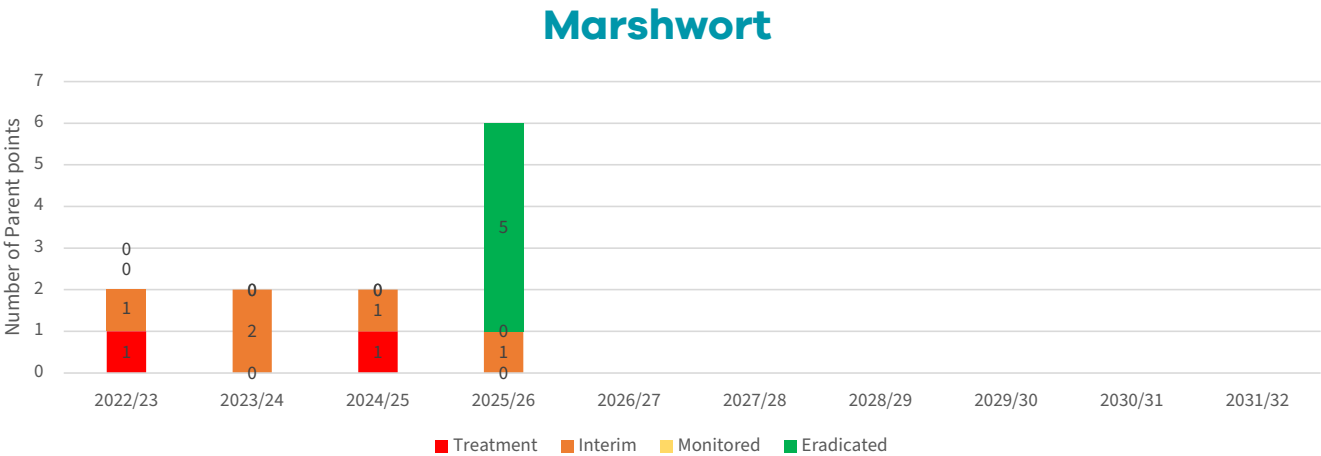
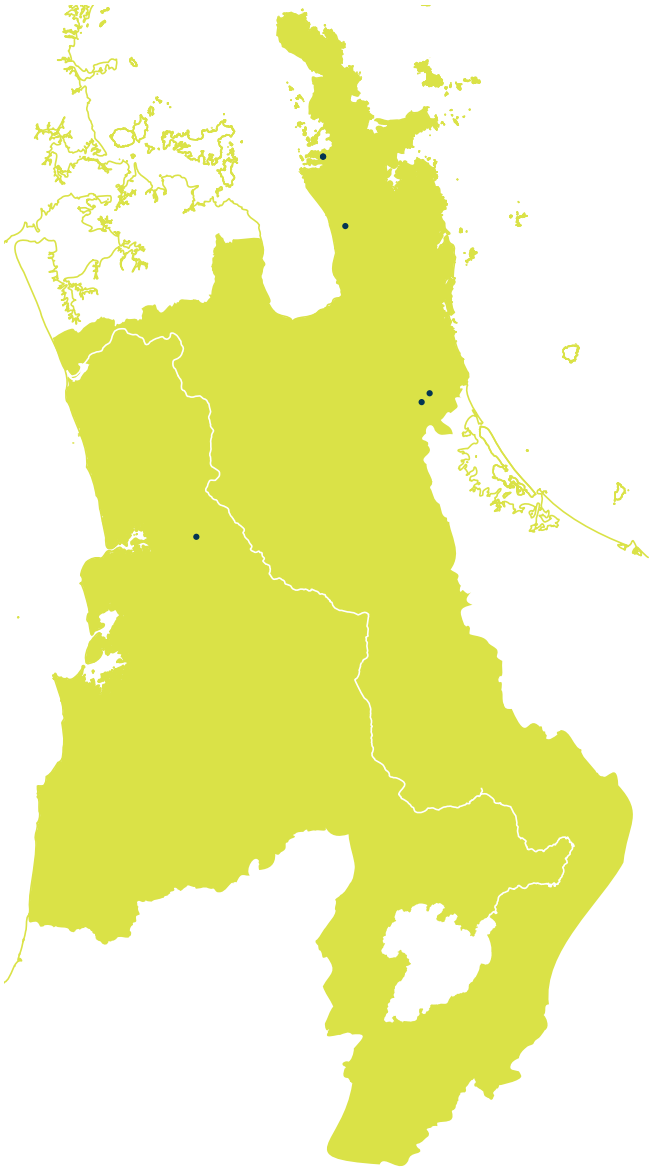


# Marshwort

(*Nymphoides geminata*)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Exclusion           | Whole of region | On track         |

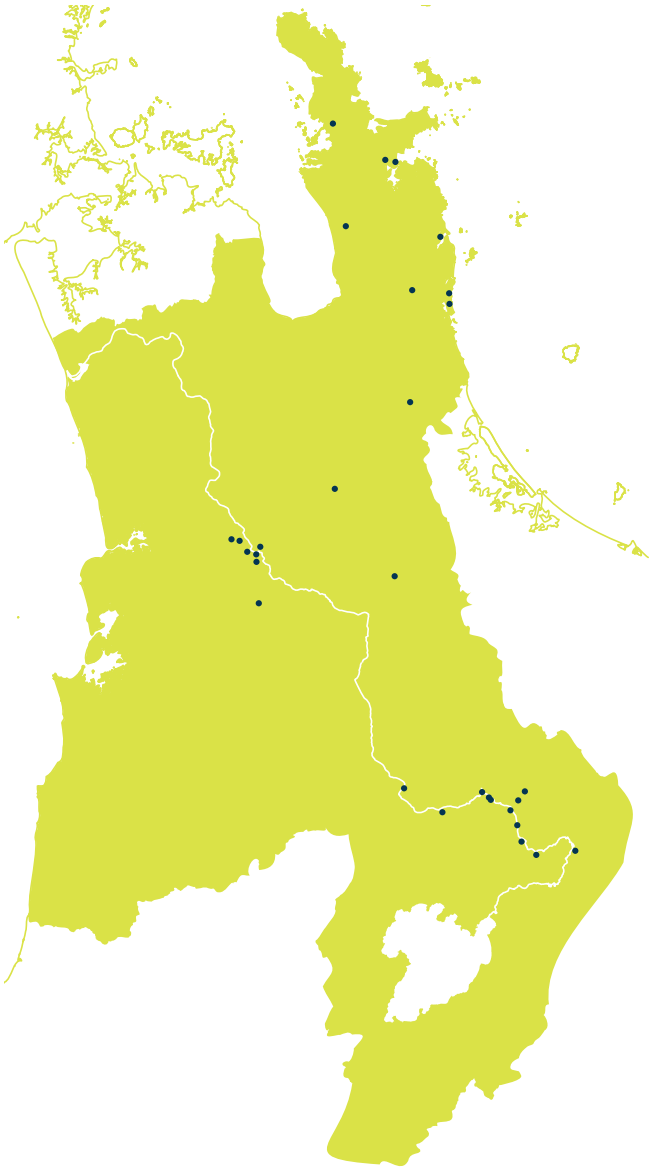
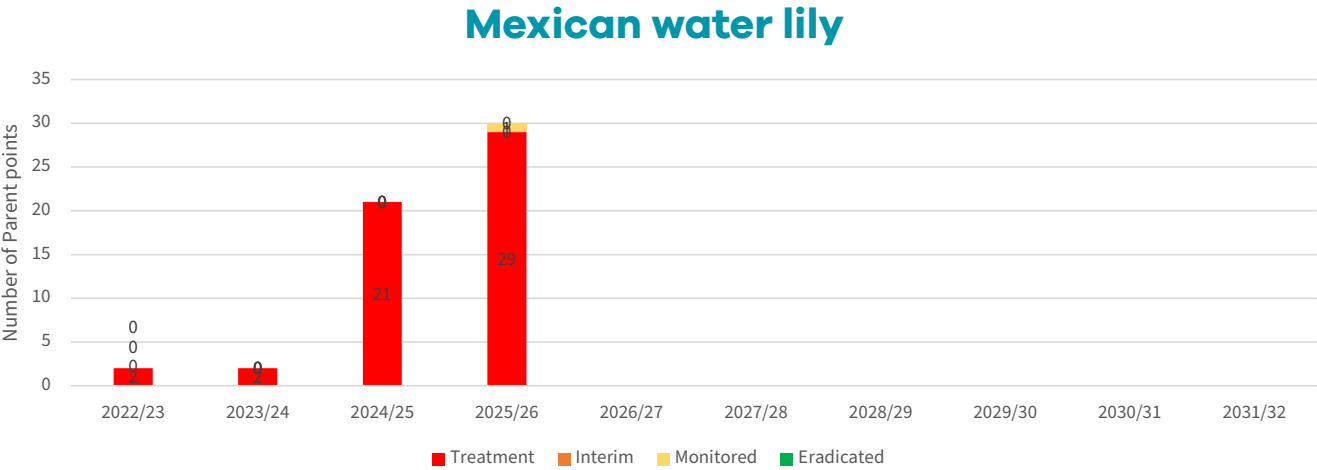
| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Total area of operational sites | 0.4ha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Total infestation parent points | 6                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Infestation area                | 0m <sup>2</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Comments                        | Of the known sites of marshwort in the region, 3 sites have been eradicated, one is being monitored, one is an interim site, and only one has required control in the 2025/2026 year. This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . |



# Mexican water lily

(*Nymphaea mexicana*)

| RPMP classification             | Area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Programme status |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Progressive containment         | Whole of region                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | On track         |
| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                  |
| Number of operational sites     | 21                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                  |
| Total area of operational sites | 50ha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                  |
| Total infestation parent points | 30                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                  |
| Infestation area                | 7,820m²                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                  |
| Comments                        | <p>Nine new Mexican water lily sites were identified this year through proactive, targeted surveillance. Increased surveillance and control across the southern Waikato River hydro lakes have improved infestation data quality. As a result, recorded pest plant cover has increased. This programme met all Key Performance Indicators outlined in the Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022–2032. (<a href="#">Drones deliver smarter pest plant management, page 46.</a>)</p> |                  |

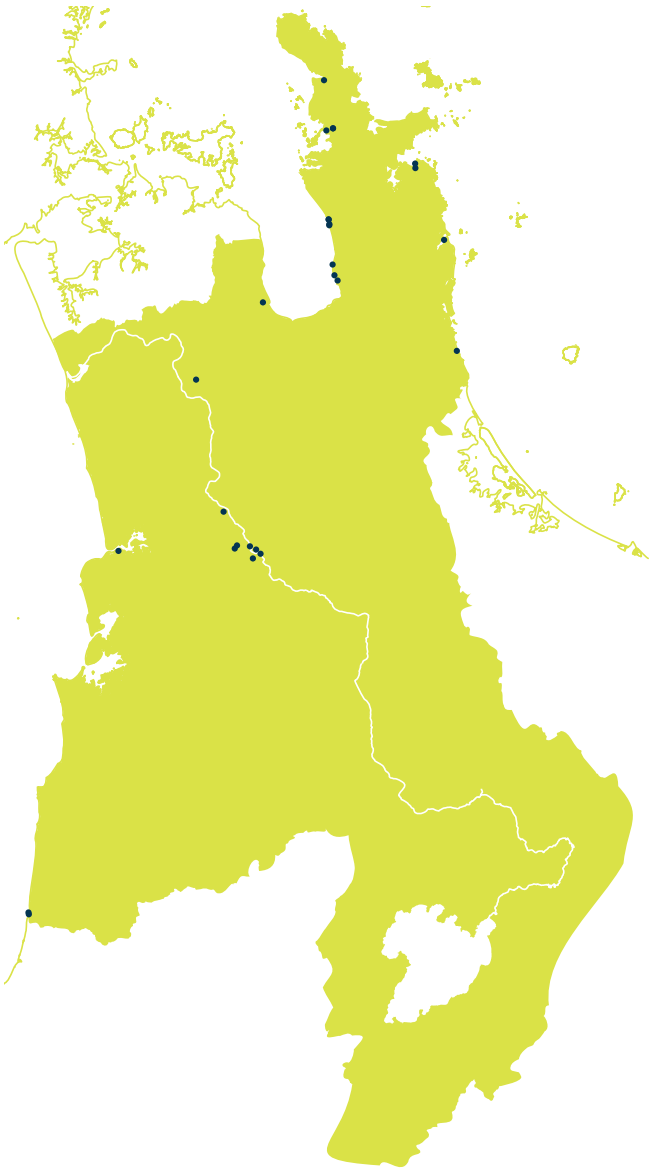
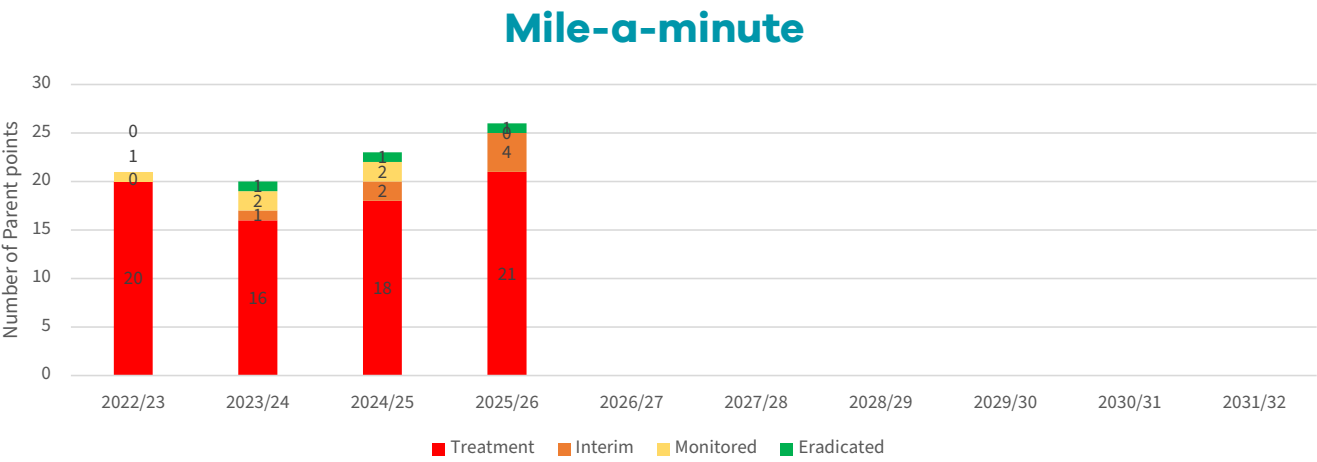


# Mile-a-minute

(Dipogon lignosus)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Eradication         | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 25                                                                                                                     |
| Total area of operational sites | 13.8ha                                                                                                                 |
| Total infestation parent points | 26                                                                                                                     |
| Infestation area                | 272m²                                                                                                                  |
| Comments                        | This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . |

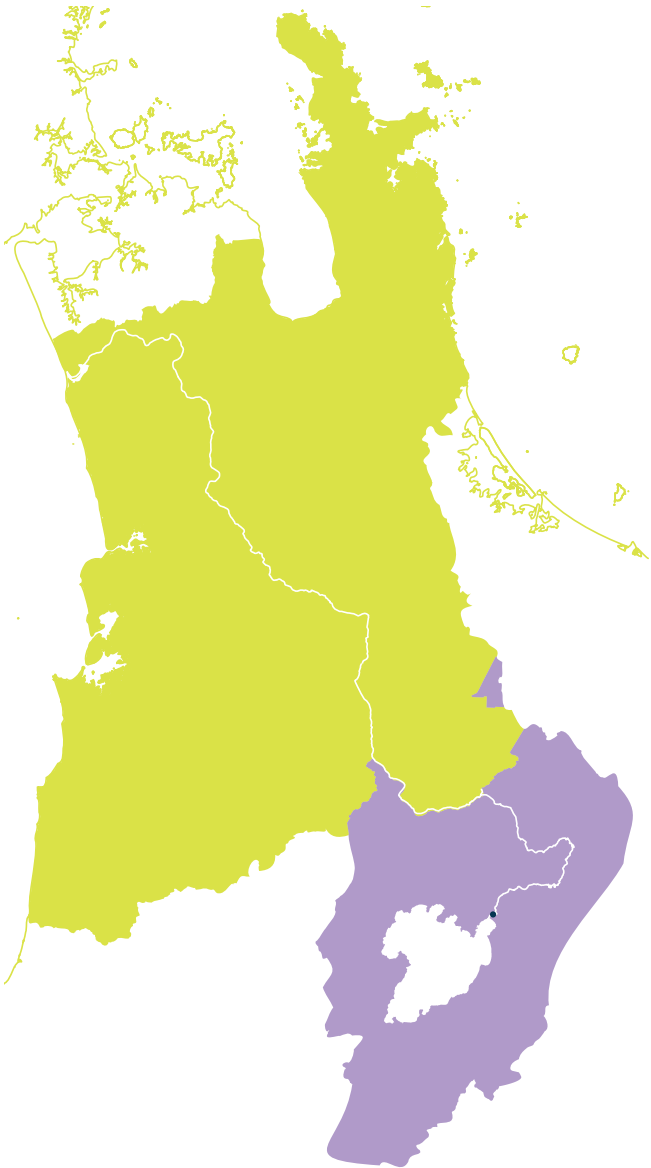
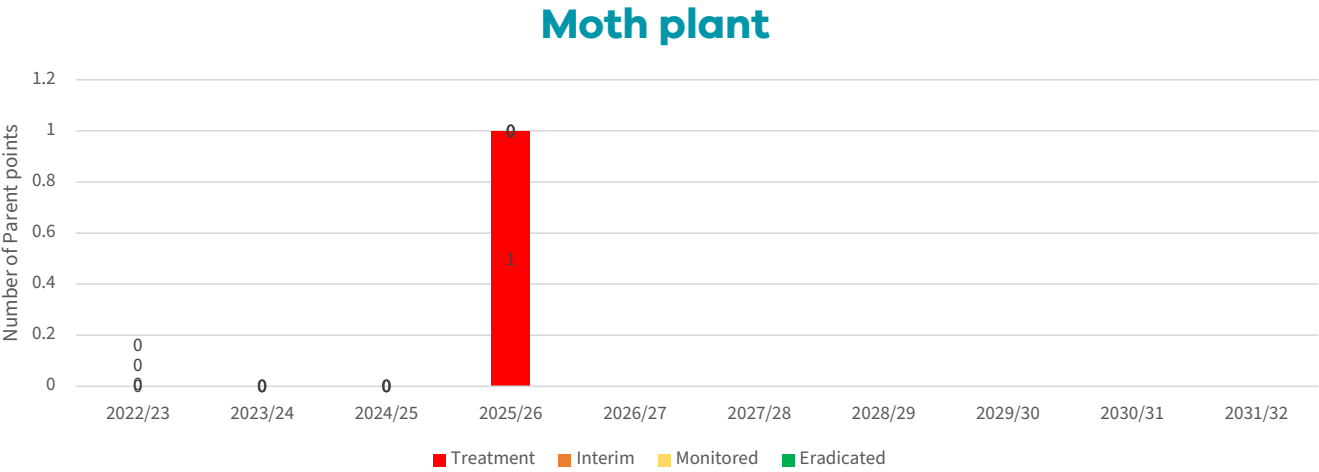


# Moth plant

(Araujia hortorum)

| RPMP classification     | Area                        | Programme status |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Progressive containment | Taupō and Rotorua districts | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Total area of operational sites | 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Total infestation points        | 1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Pest plant cover                | 4.1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Comments                        | <p>This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i>. Moth plant is a sustained control pest plant for the rest of the Waikato region outside the Taupō and Rotorua districts, therefore statistics for this species outside those districts are reported on under the key statistics section (<i>Trio targeted for containment in cooler climes, page 21</i>). Council again supported HCC with their annual moth plant competition. (<i>The second annual HCC moth plant competition, page 39</i>)</p> |

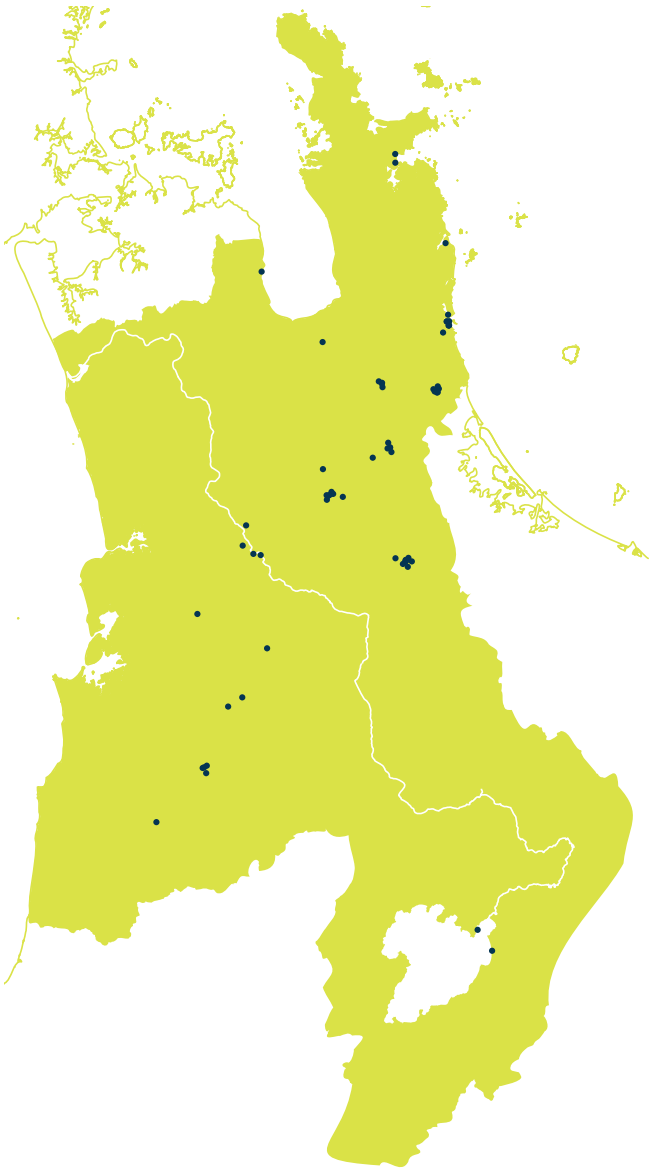
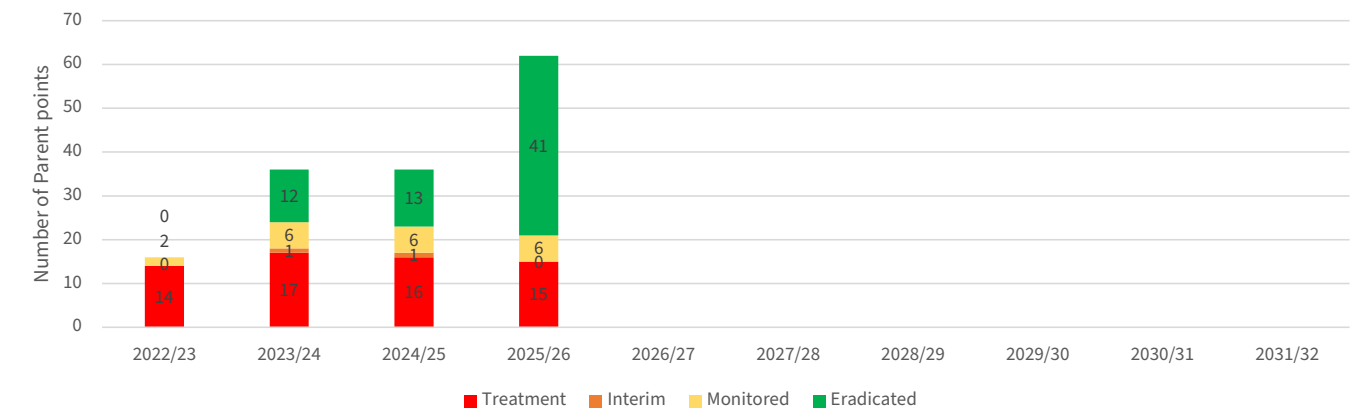


# Nassella/Fine stemmed needle grass/Mexican feather grass

(Nassella tenuissima)

| RPMP classification             | Area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Programme status |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Eradication                     | Whole of region                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | On track         |
| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                  |
| Number of operational sites     | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 33               |
| Total area of operational sites | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 6.7ha            |
| Total infestation points        | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 63               |
| Infestation area                | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 15.4m²           |
| Comments                        | This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . The increase in infestation parent points is primarily due to increased surveillance of historic sites, which has improved the accuracy and completeness of programme data. |                  |

## Fine stemmed needle grass

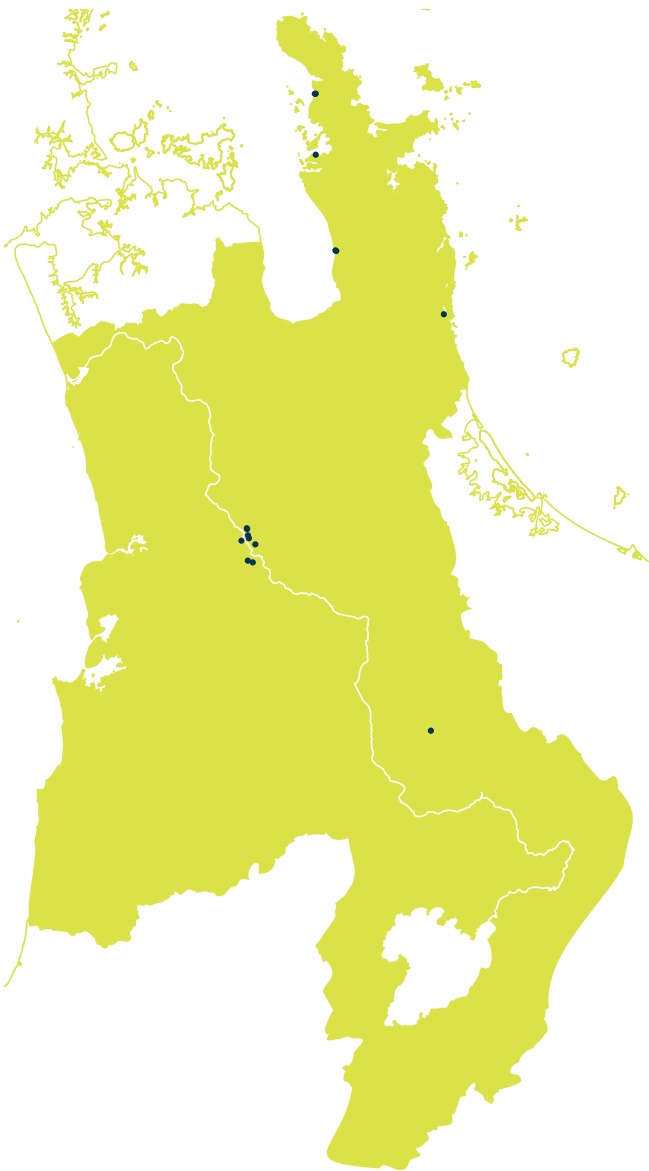
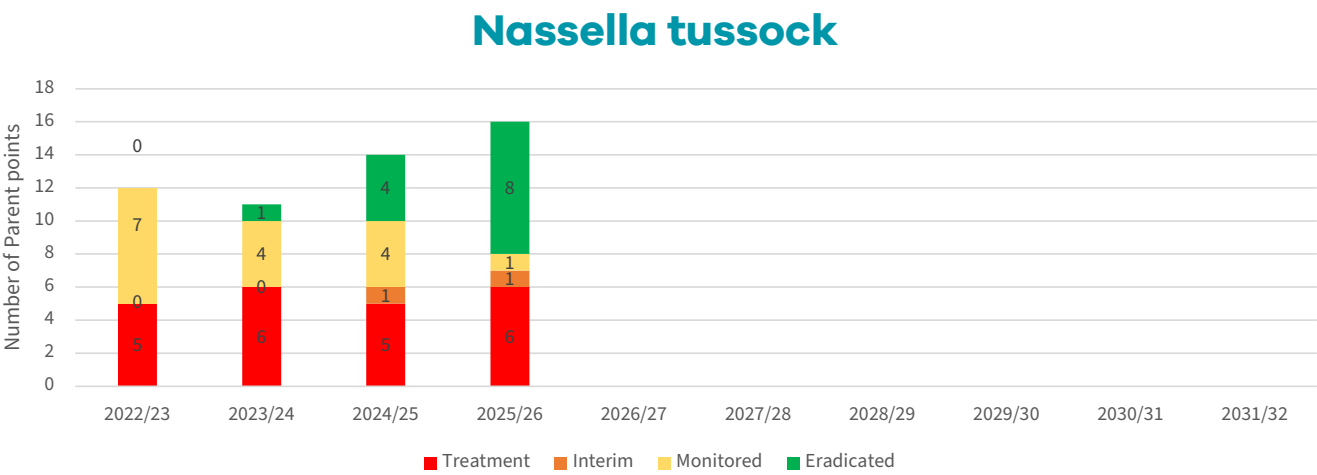


# Nassella tussock

(Nassella trichotoma)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Eradication         | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 6                                                                                                                      |
| Total area of operational sites | 15.5ha                                                                                                                 |
| Total infestation parent points | 16                                                                                                                     |
| Pest plant cover                | 562m²                                                                                                                  |
| Comments                        | This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . |

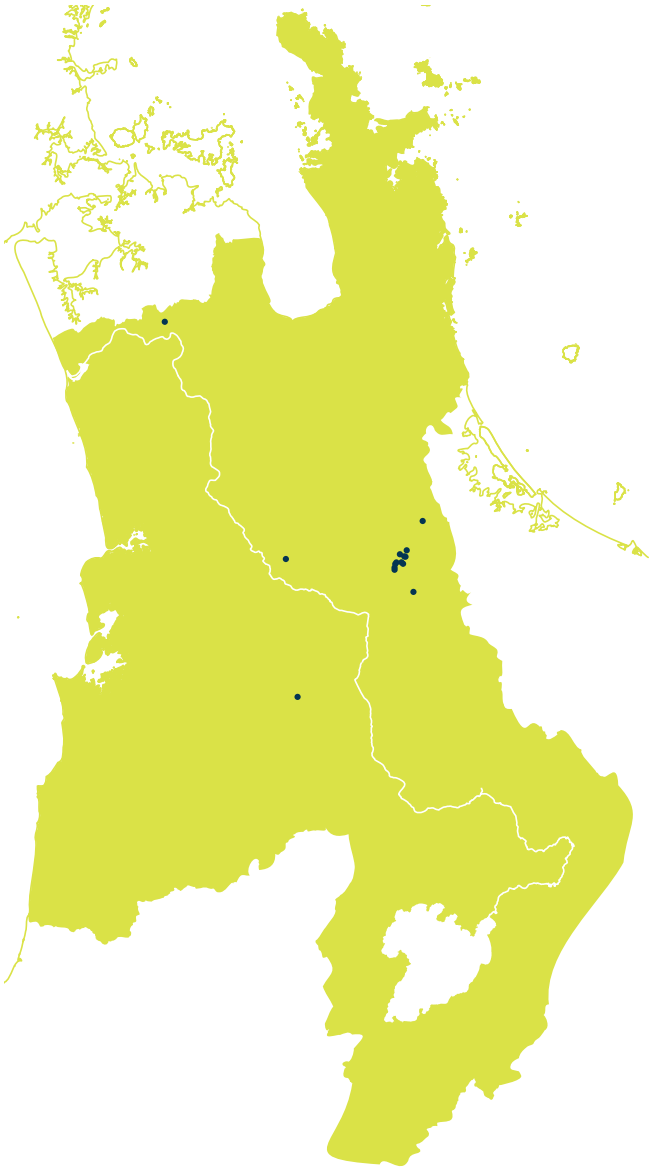
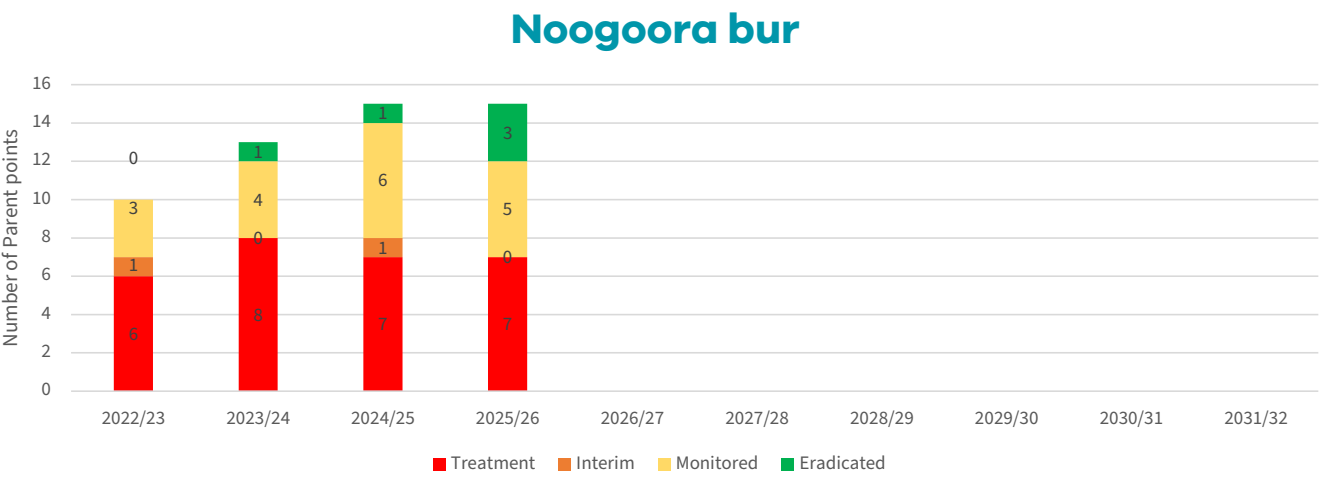


# Noogora bur

(*Xanthium strumarium*)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Eradication         | Whole of region | On track         |

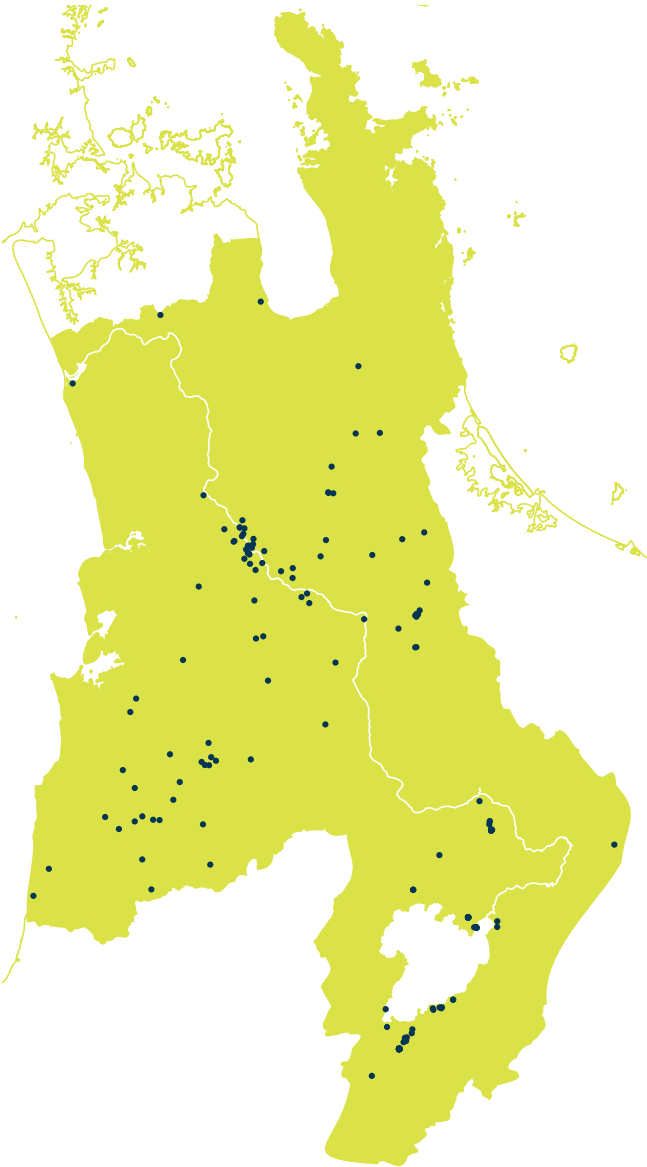
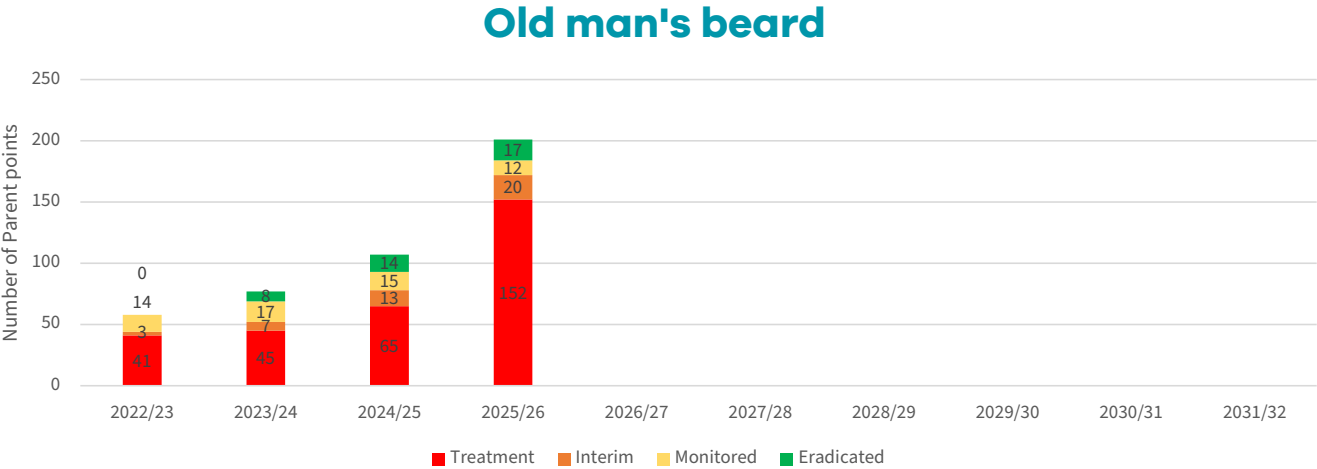
| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 13                                                                                                                     |
| Total area of operational sites | 310.5ha                                                                                                                |
| Total infestation parent points | 15                                                                                                                     |
| Pest plant cover                | 1112.2m²                                                                                                               |
| Comments                        | This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . |



# Old man's beard

(Clematis vitalba)

| RPMP classification             | Area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Programme status |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Progressive containment         | Whole of region                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | On track         |
| Programme summary               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Results          |
| Number of operational sites     | <div></div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 94               |
| Total area of operational sites | <div></div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 2,750ha          |
| Total infestation parent points | <div></div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 200              |
| Pest plant cover                | <div></div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 3,077m²          |
| Comments                        | <p>This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i>. Old man's beard remains a significant pest plant in the southern Waikato region. Due to the large number of known infestations, it is not feasible to survey and control every site annually. Consequently, a risk-based approach is used, with surveillance and control efforts prioritised at high-priority sites each year.</p> |                  |

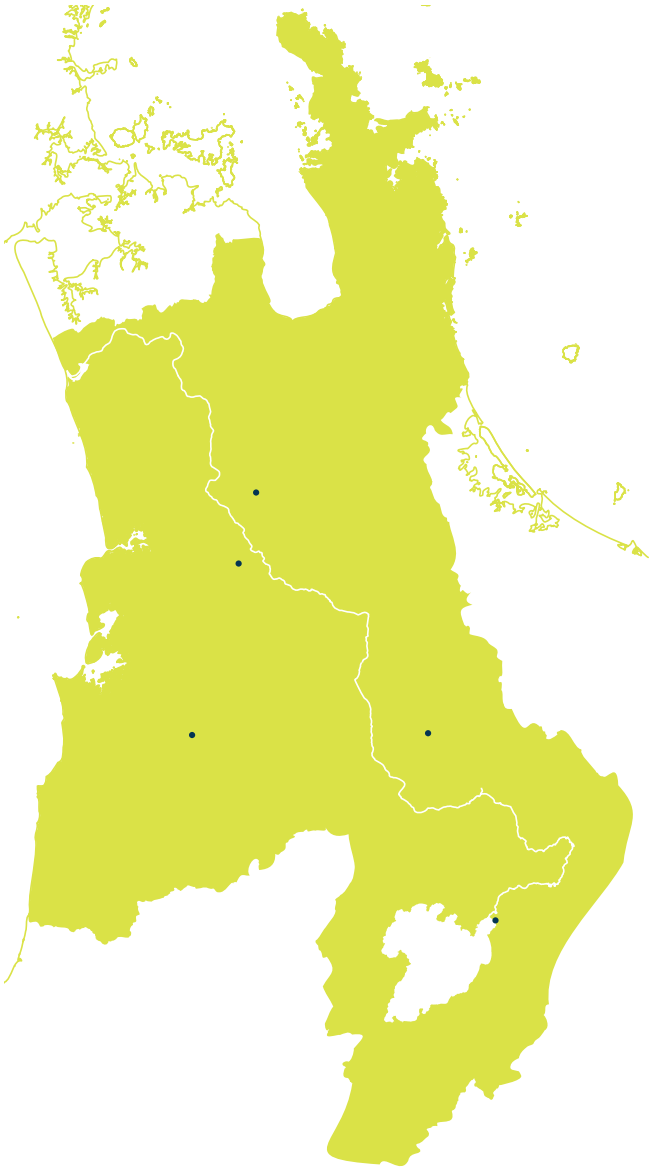
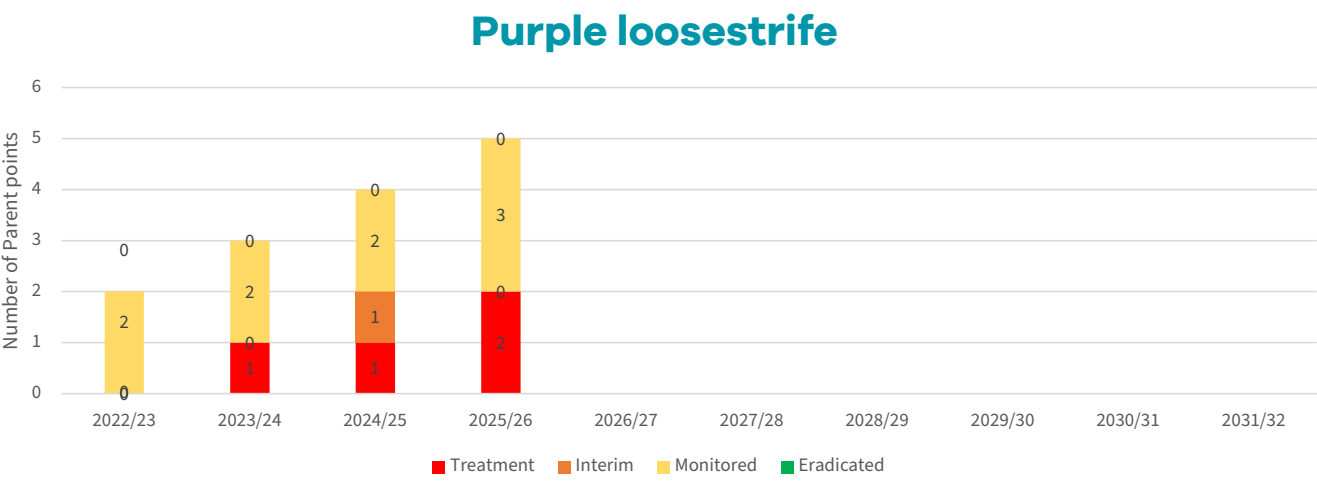


# Purple loosestrife

(*Lythrum salicaria*)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Eradication         | Whole of region | On track         |

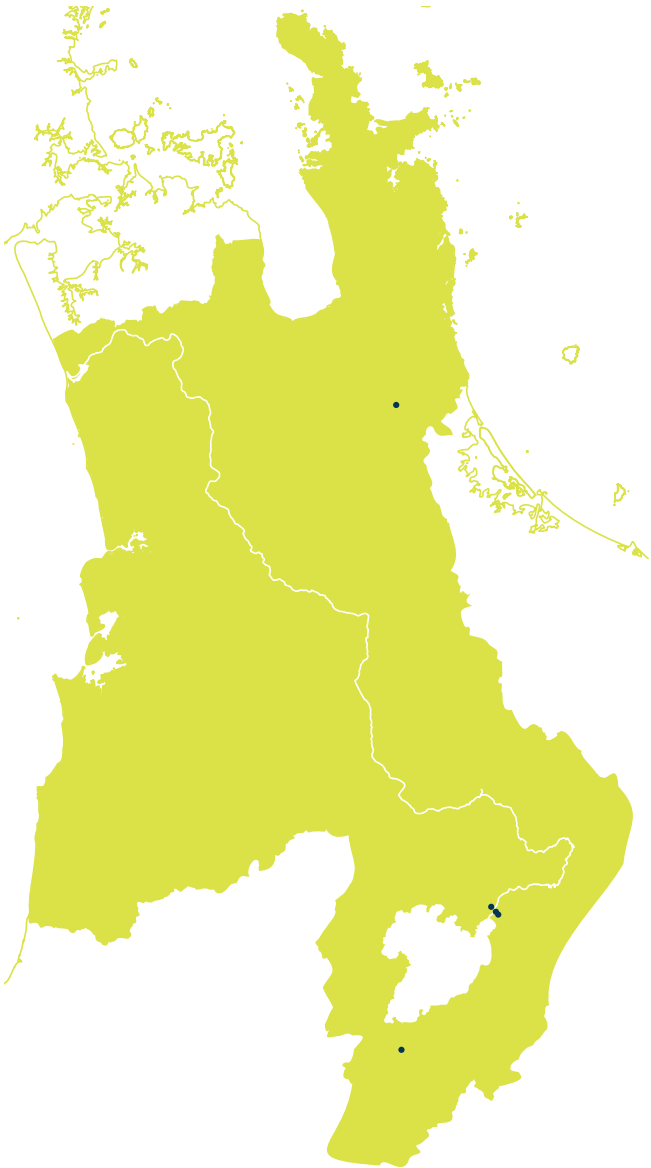
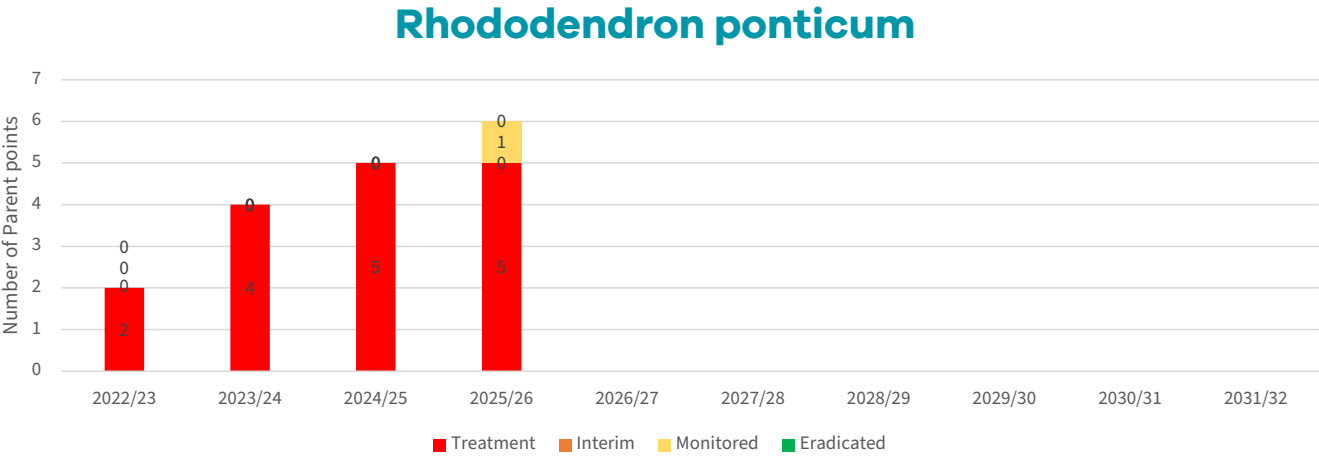
| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | ● 5                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Total area of operational sites | ● 5.6ha                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Total infestation parent points | ● 5                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Pest plant cover                | ● 10m²                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Comments                        | There was an increase of one site in 2025/26 due to one plant being found at a historic site. This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . |



Rhododendron ponticum

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Eradication         | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Total area of operational sites | 13.7ha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Total infestation parent points | 6                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Pest plant cover                | 11m²                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Comments                        | This programme has not met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> can be difficult to distinguish from other rhododendron species and cultivars, particularly when plants are not flowering. As a result, it is likely that some infestations within the region remain undetected, which may have affected progress towards achieving programme targets. |

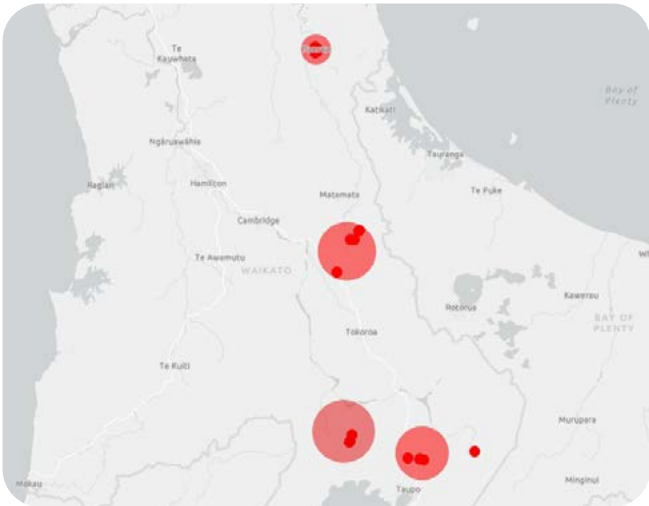
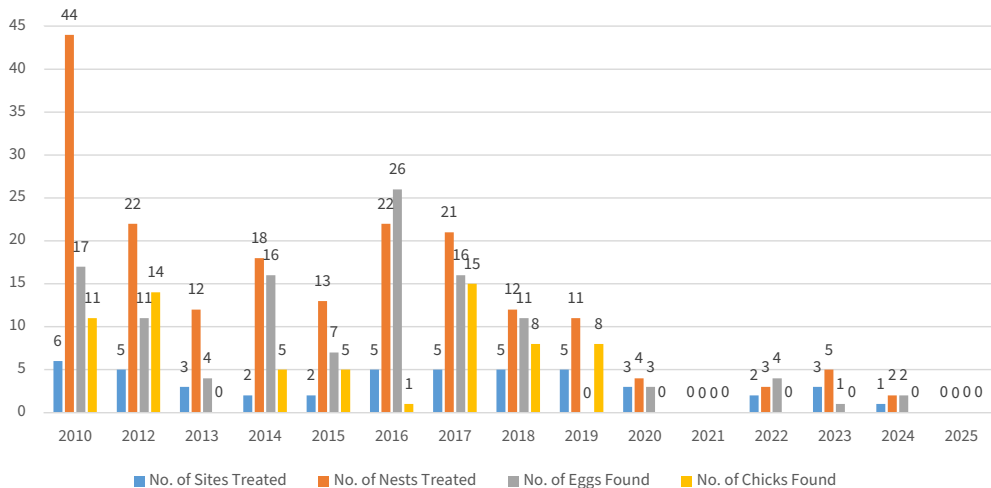


# Rook

(Corvus frugilegus)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Eradication         | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary             | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of sightings received  | IRIS – 12 sighting reports                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Surveillance undertaken       | All historic and current rook ‘hot spots’ across the region.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Number of known rookery sites | 0 confirmed rookeries in 2025/2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Nest sites controlled         | 2 nests found with 0 eggs/0 nests required control                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Comments                      | <p>The programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21 confirmed sightings of rooks.</li> <li>Delivered targeted communications: installed posters in rural supply stores and erected billboards at key locations.</li> <li>Built on network of landowners with their ‘eyes on the sky’.</li> <li>Updated Rook app with all surveillance data.</li> <li>Drone surveillance of nests located.</li> <li>Attended biannual rook meeting with NI regional colleagues.</li> </ul> |



## Report a Rook!

The rook population in the Waikato region is now at very low numbers, with only a handful of active ‘hot spots’ remaining. Ahead of the 2026 spring breeding season large billboards have been erected at key locations around those active areas. Postcards have been distributed to nearby landowners – with details on how to contact council to ‘Report a Rook!’. Staff have also visited local schools to encourage students to ‘look for rooks’ too!

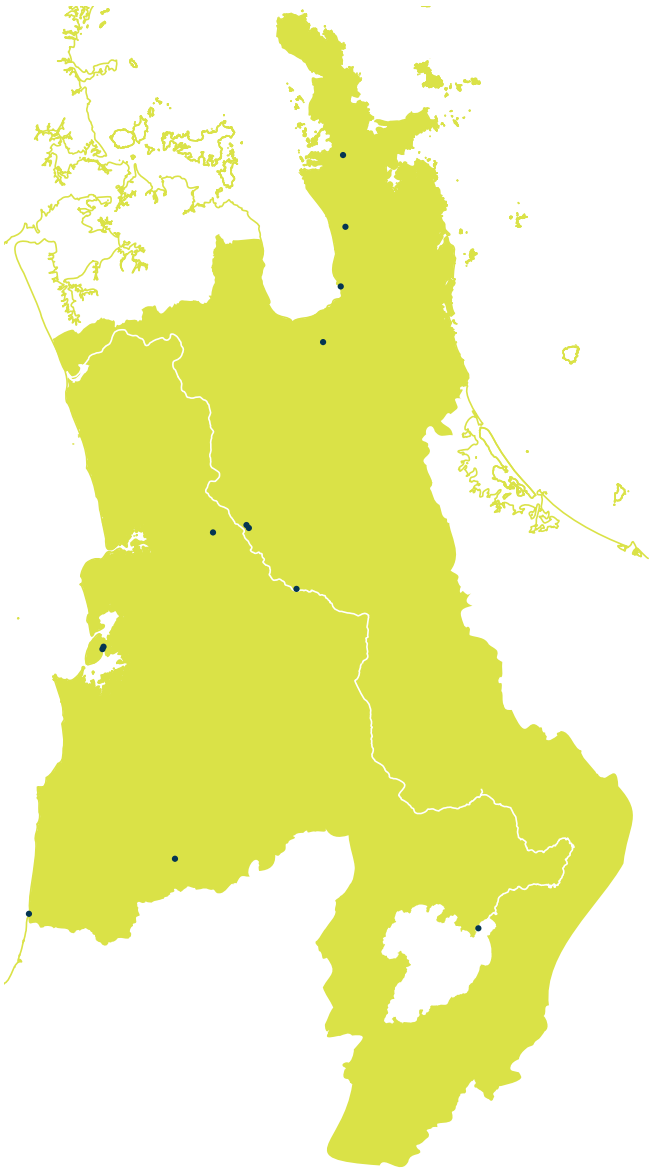
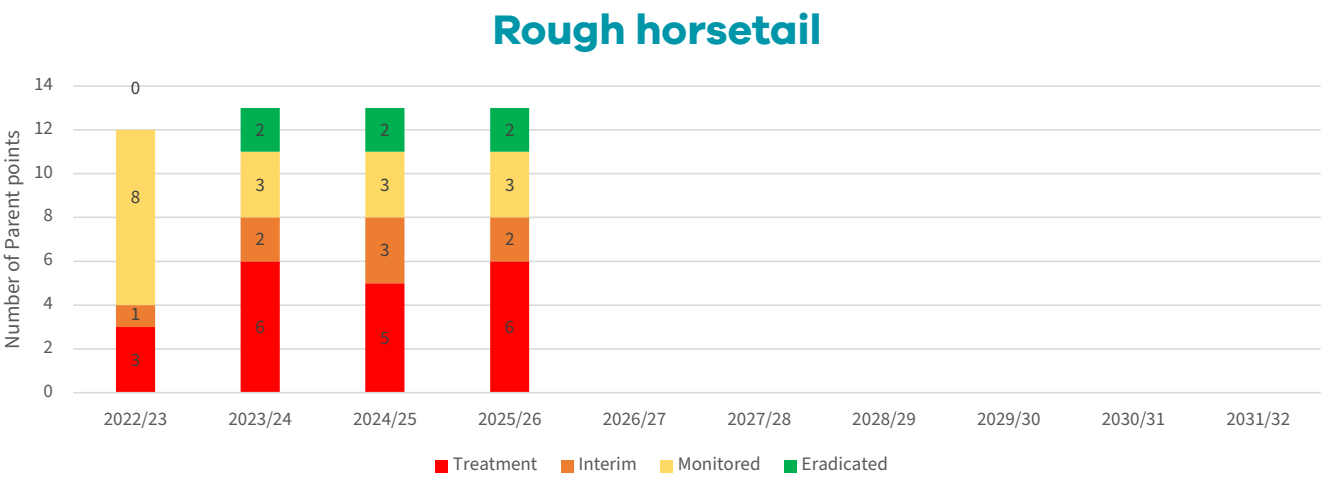


# Rough horsetail

(*Equisetum hyemale*)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Eradication         | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 13                                                                                                                    |
| Total area of operational sites | 11.8ha                                                                                                                |
| Total infestation parent points | 13                                                                                                                    |
| Pest plant cover                | 71m <sup>2</sup>                                                                                                      |
| Comments                        | The programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . |

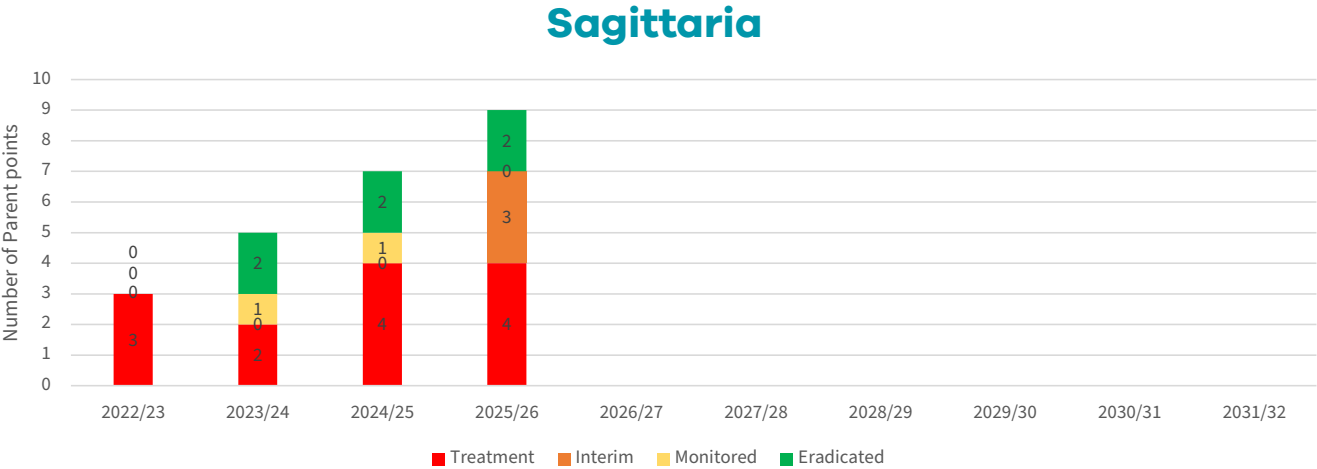
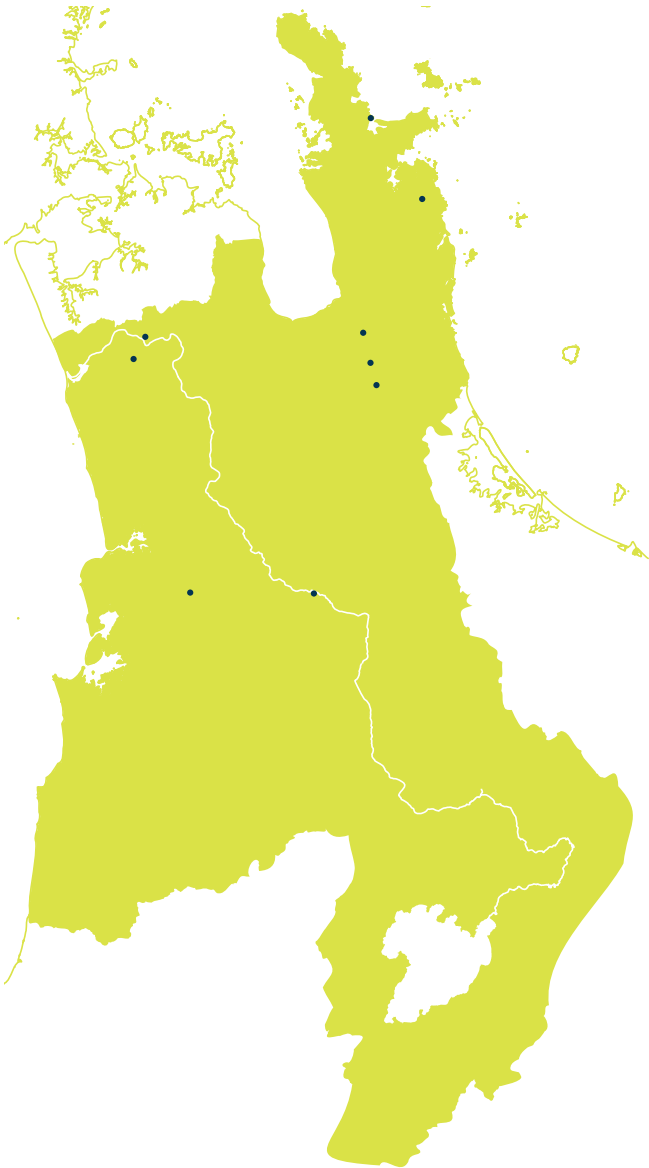


# Sagittaria/arrowhead

(*Sagittaria montevidensis*, *S. sagittifolia* and *S. platyphylla*)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Eradication         | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 5                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Total area of operational sites | 1,270ha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Total infestation parent points | 9                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Infestation area                | 14m²                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Comments                        | <p>This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i>.</p> <p>The increase in recorded sites is attributable to improved surveillance of historic sites and the subsequent detection of additional infestations. Several <i>Sagittaria</i> species were inadvertently omitted from the current RPMP; however, amendments are pending to correct this and ensure the programme remains on track to achieve its intended outcomes.</p> |

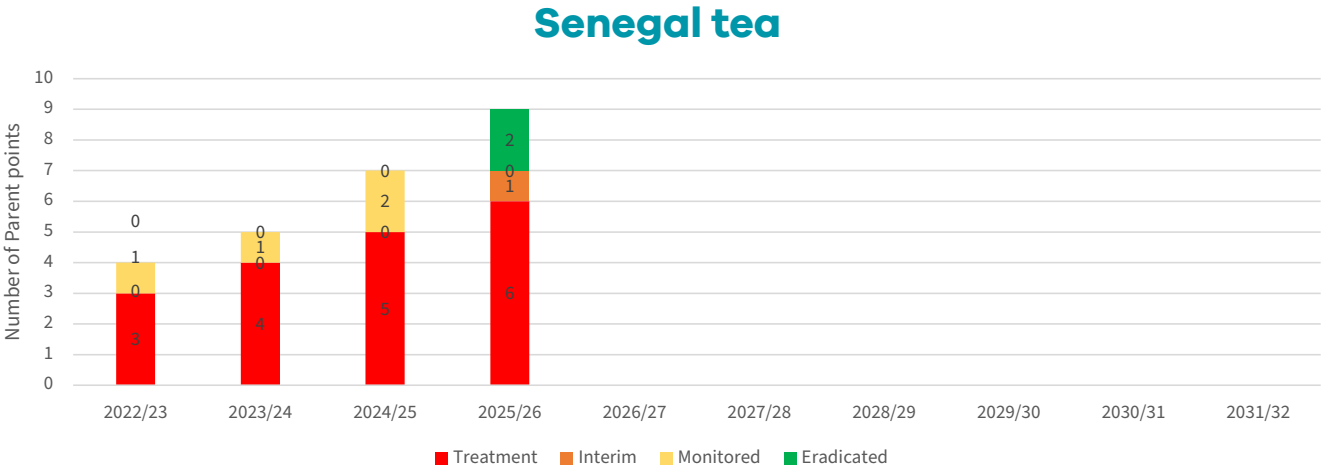
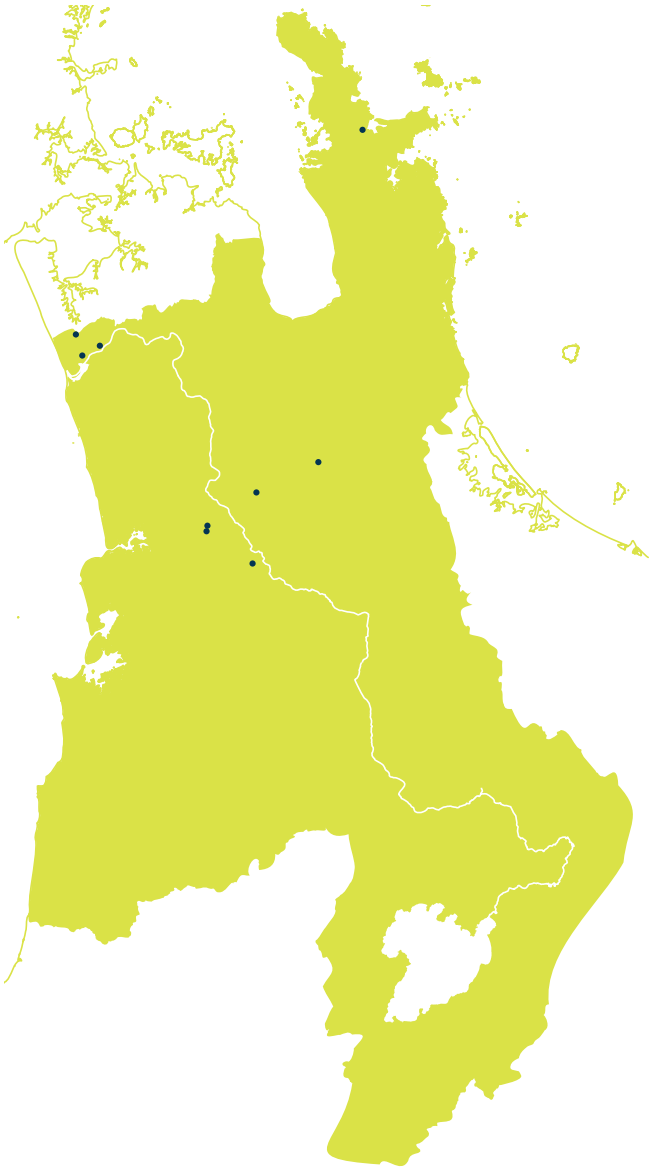


# Senegal tea

(*Gymnocoronis spilanthoides*)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Eradication         | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 7                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Total area of operational sites | 172.8ha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Total infestation parent points | 9                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Infestation area                | 562.7m²                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Comments                        | <p>This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i>. While there are four principal treatment areas currently under active control, some treatment areas contain multiple infestation parent points. The number of recorded parent points has increased as a result of this year’s targeted surveillance and the reassessment of historic infestation sites, improving understanding of the pest's distribution within the region. (<i>Research towards effective eradication of Senegal tea, page 50.</i>)</p> |

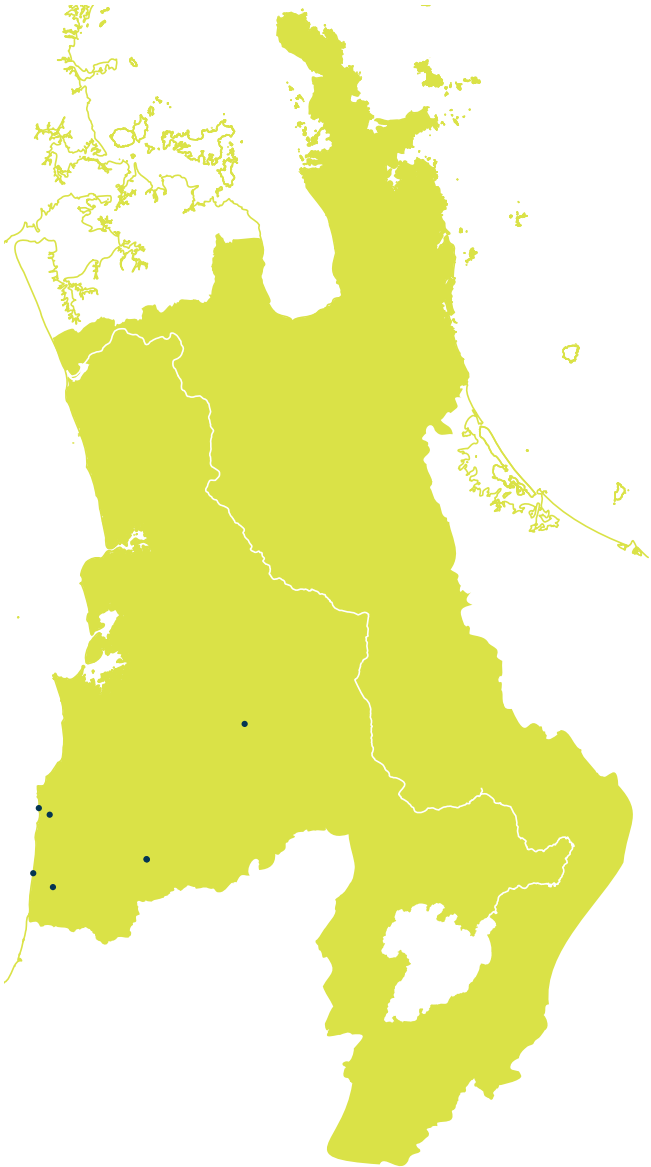
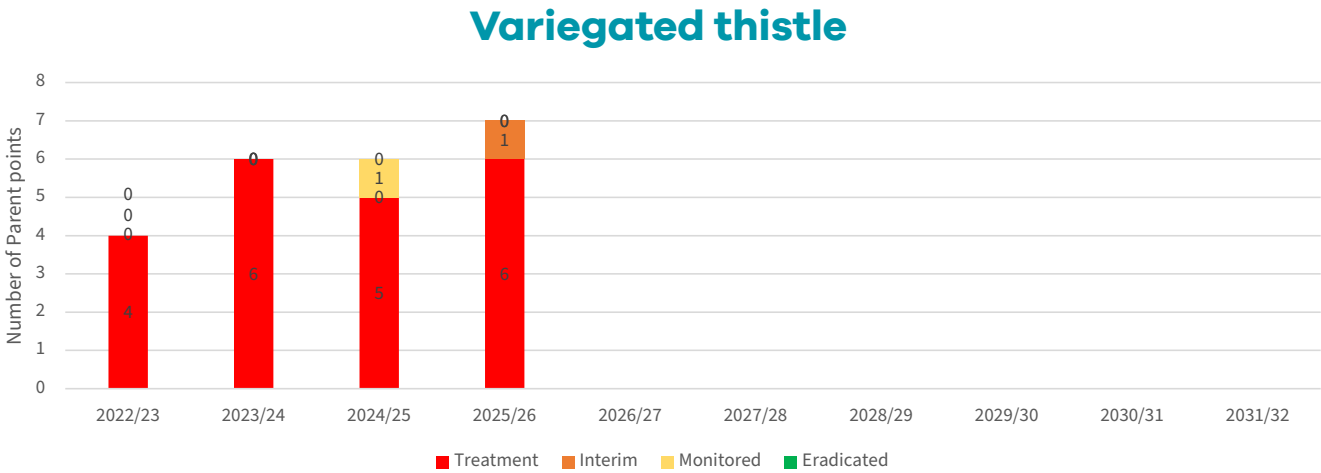


# Thistle (variegated thistle)

(*Silybum marianum*)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Eradication         | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 7                                                                                                                      |
| Total area of operational sites | 1,664ha                                                                                                                |
| Total infestation parent points | 7                                                                                                                      |
| Pest plant cover                | 91,000m <sup>2</sup>                                                                                                   |
| Comments                        | This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . |

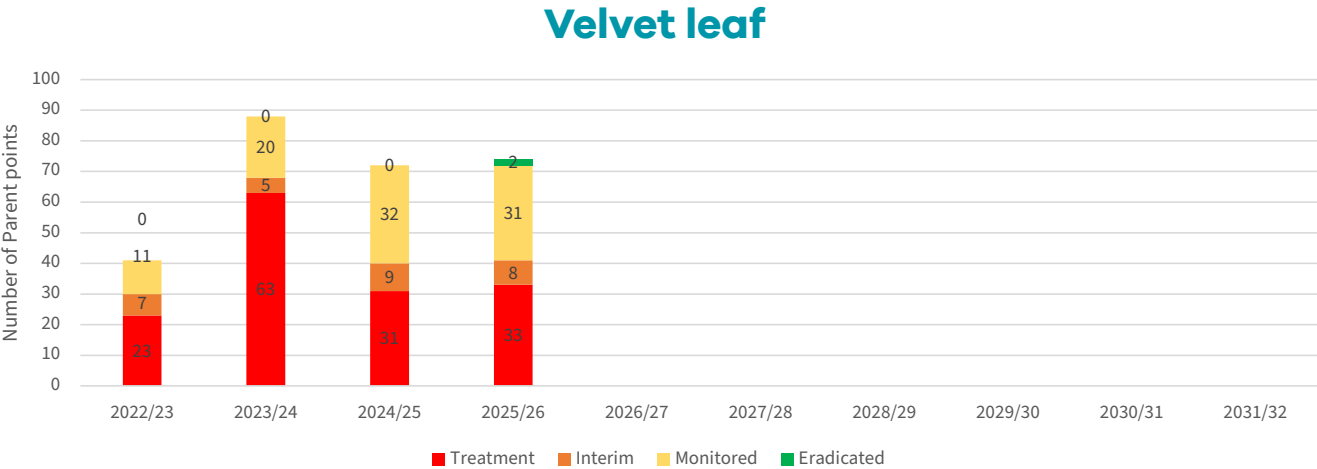
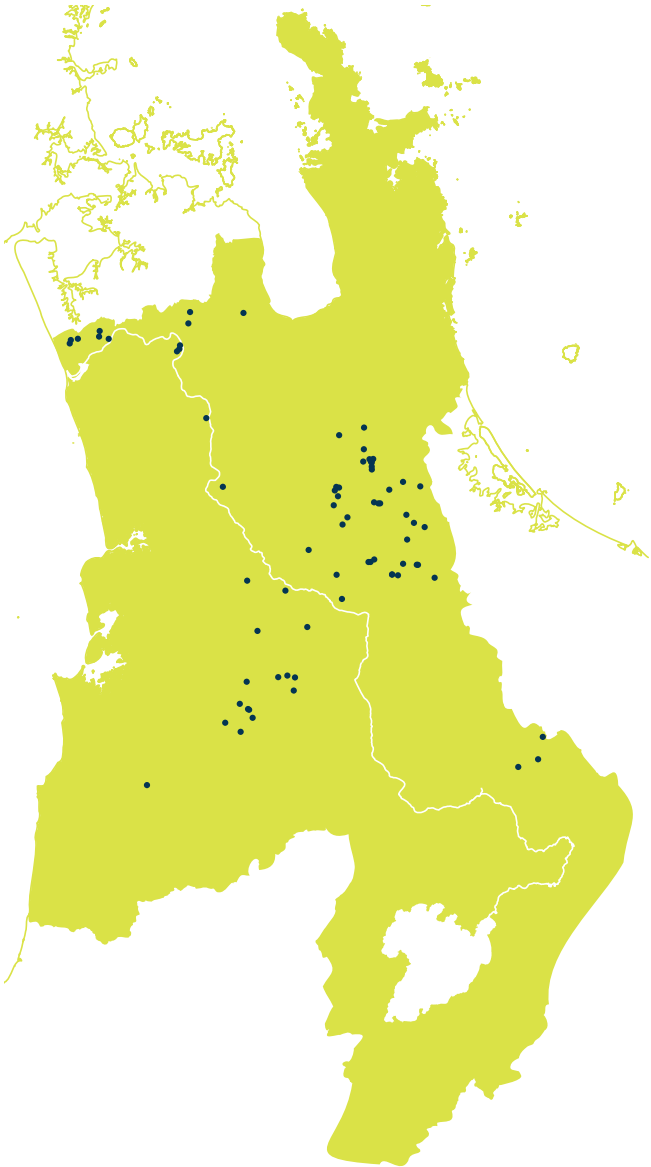


# Velvetleaf

(*Abutilon theophrasti*)

| RPMP classification     | Area            | Programme status |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Progressive containment | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 92                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Total area of operational sites | 7,151.9ha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Total infestation parent points | 74                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Infestation area                | 227m²                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Comments                        | <p>This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i>. The number of infestation parent points with ‘treatment’ status has decreased because of consistent control. Also, there has been a reduction in overall infestation parent points. This reduction reflects improved data quality rather than a change in infestations. (<a href="#">Shutting down velvetleaf pathways, page 13.</a>)</p> |



# Wallaby (Bennett’s, brush-tailed rock, parma and swamp wallaby)

(*Macropus rufogriseus*, *Petrogale penicillate*, *Macropus parma*, and *Wallabia bicolor*)

| RPMP classification                                                       | Area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Programme status |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Exclusion                                                                 | Whole of region                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | On track         |
| Programme summary                                                         | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                  |
| Number of sightings outside of the Containment Area received <sup>1</sup> | 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                  |
| Number of responses required                                              | 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                  |
| Comments                                                                  | No occurrences of Bennett’s, brush-tailed rock or swamp wallaby were recorded in the Waikato region this financial year. <sup>1</sup><br>Dama, parma, brush-tailed rock and swamp wallaby are present on Kawau Island, where an eradication programme is underway (refer below).<br>This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . |                  |

### Kawau Island Wallaby Eradication Programme – learnings and challenges

In early 2026, council staff visited Kawau Island, in the Hauraki Gulf, where Auckland Council (AC), DOC and contractors have begun a wallaby and possum eradication programme, which was first proposed by the Pohutukawa Trust over 25 years ago. Removal of dama, parma, swamp and brush-tailed wallaby and possums is part of a broader Pest Free Kawau Island project to restore the island’s native ecosystems. The scale of damage caused by long term wallaby and possum browsing was obvious during the visit, in the kānuka forest’s open understorey, lack of palatable native plants and dominance of non-palatable exotic weeds like Agapanthus and arum lily (see the photo). AC undertook baseline vegetation assessments in 2025. Ongoing monitoring will be important to track vegetation change as browsing pressure is eliminated, and to identify emerging weed issues.

Eradication of wallaby from Kawau is being undertaken using ground-based hunting (guided by thermal UAV) and deployment of toxins. Two of our staff are on the Technical Advisory Group for the eradication programme, and the visit provided an opportunity to share learnings, discuss challenges and see the progress that is being made.



1 Recent genetic studies by Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research have determined that parma wallaby are already present in the region and may have been here for some time. They are controlled along with dama wallaby as part of the Tipu Mātoro National Wallaby Eradication Programme.

## Wallaby (dama) (*Macropus eugenii*)

| RPMP classification                                                  | Area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Programme status                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Progressive containment                                              | Whole of region – outside of Dama Wallaby Progressive Containment Area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | On track                                                                   |
| Programme summary                                                    | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                            |
| Number of complaints/enquiries received                              | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | IRIS – 5                                                                   |
| Number of ‘out of containment area’ public sighting reports received | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | WALL-IS – 32 reports or sightings out of containment <sup>1</sup>          |
| Wallaby indicator dog and drone surveillance                         | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 27,469 ha covered (dog or drone surveillance)                              |
|                                                                      | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 8,128.51 ha of night shooting                                              |
| Direct control – night shooting<br>– aerial control                  | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | >527 wallabies (2 outside containment, >525 within the containment buffer) |
|                                                                      | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 2,901ha aerial control – Paeroa Ranges (contribution to DOC/WRC operation) |
| Tipu Mātoro National Wallaby Programme outcomes met                  | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Yes                                                                        |
| Comments                                                             | <p>Undertook surveillance and control work in response to wallaby sightings and detections outside of the containment area; and wallaby surveillance and control work in priority areas in the buffer within containment.</p> <p>Collaborated with DOC to deliver the Paeroa Range Aerial 1080 Operation, towards eradication of wallaby on the range.</p> <p>Attended stakeholder and community events as required.</p> <p>This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i>.</p> |                                                                            |

- 1 Public reports or sightings submitted via [reportwallabies.nz/](https://reportwallabies.nz/) and captured in WALL-IS, the data management system administered by LINZ for the Tipu Mātoro National Wallaby Eradication Programme. Council follows up on them, with surveillance and control undertaken as required.



### Paeroa Range – towards wallaby eradication

The Paeroa Range currently lies within the NI wallaby containment area, with council's long-term plan being to eradicate wallaby from it and push the containment boundary east. In this area, we work in partnership with DOC and manu whenua Ngāti Tahu – Ngāti Whaoa, as a partner of the Tipu Mātoro NI Wallaby Eradication Programme. In 2025/26, extensive dog and camera surveillance was undertaken to detect wallaby, with ground night shooting to target wallaby in accessible areas on the margins of the range and to the north, to stop spread from the buffer area.

We also partnered with DOC in the delivery of aerial 1080 control to the range. Post-control wallaby monitoring results due in July 2026 will be used to guide our next steps, which may include retrofitting or construction of wallaby proof fencing to stop southerly spread and help protect the gains made to date.

# Wasp (common/German)

(*Vespula vulgaris* and *Vespula germanica*)

| RPMP classification | Area                           | Programme status |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Sustained control   | Whole of region (human health) | On track         |

| Programme summary                       | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of enquiries/complaints received | ● IRIS – 11                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Number of inspections undertaken        | ● 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Service delivery required               | ● 0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Comments                                | Requests from the council to Hamilton City, South Waikato, and Rotorua City councils regarding wasp nests on public land were promptly responded to and nests controlled. This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . |



**Common wasp**  
 Photo: Jakob Fahr  
 Licence: iNaturalist, Creative Commons



**Common wasp nest**  
 Photo: awenithology  
 Licence: iNaturalist, Creative Commons



**German wasp**  
 Photo: Elizabeth Green  
 Licence: iNaturalist, Creative Commons



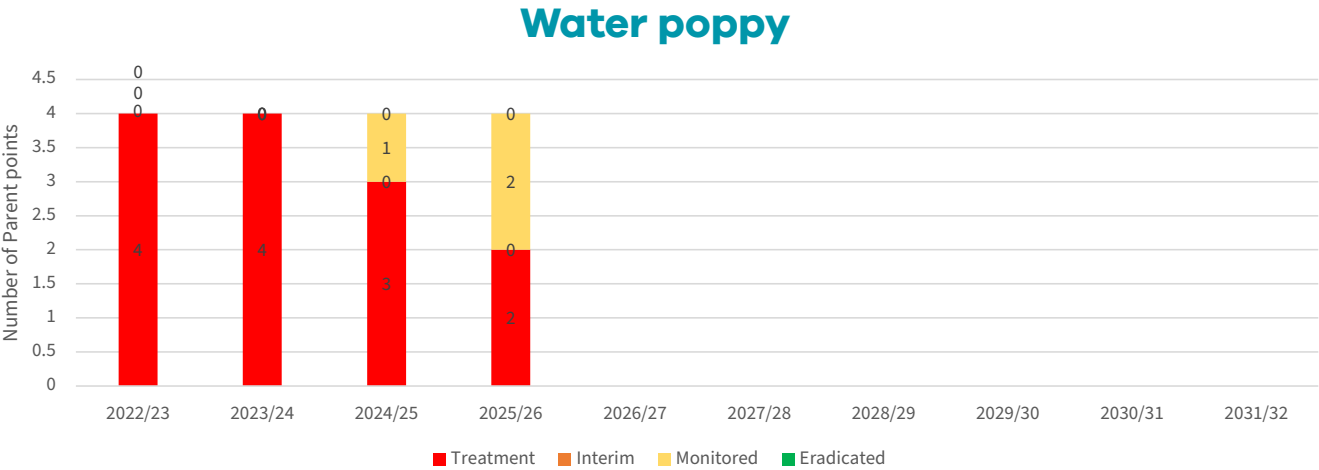
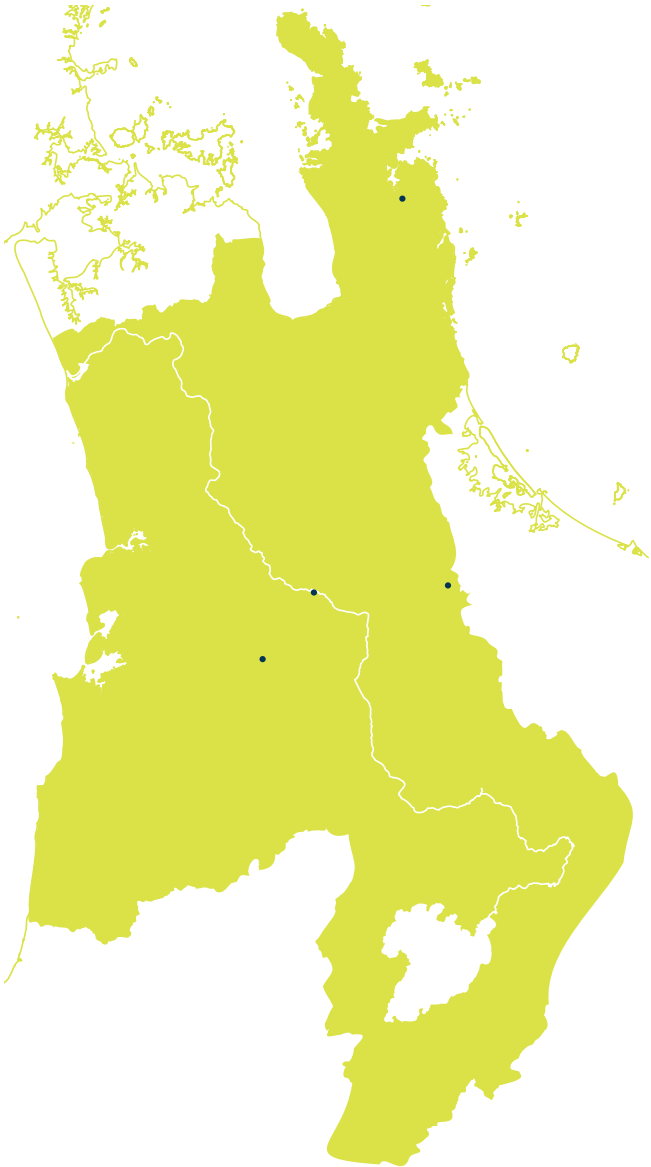
**German wasp nest**  
 Photo: Rácz Botond  
 Licence: iNaturalist, Creative Commons

# Water poppy

(Hydrocleys nymphoides)

| RPMP classification | Area            | Programme status |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Eradication         | Whole of region | On track         |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Total area of operational sites | 9ha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Total infestation parent points | 4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Pest plant cover                | 500m²                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Comments                        | <p>This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i>.</p> <p>This programme has had some challenges. The council has begun control on the largest known water poppy site in the country.</p> |

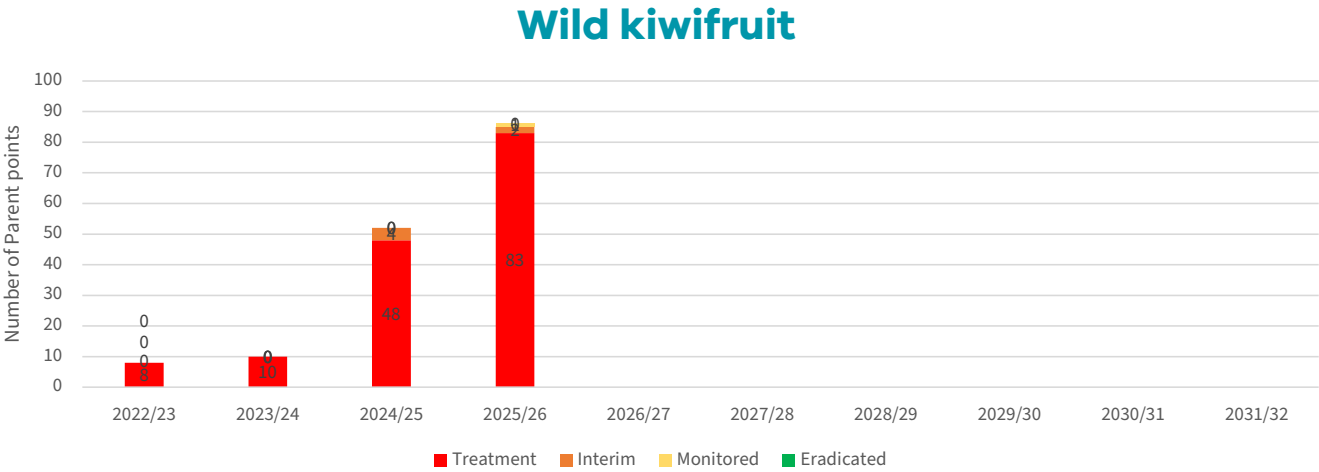
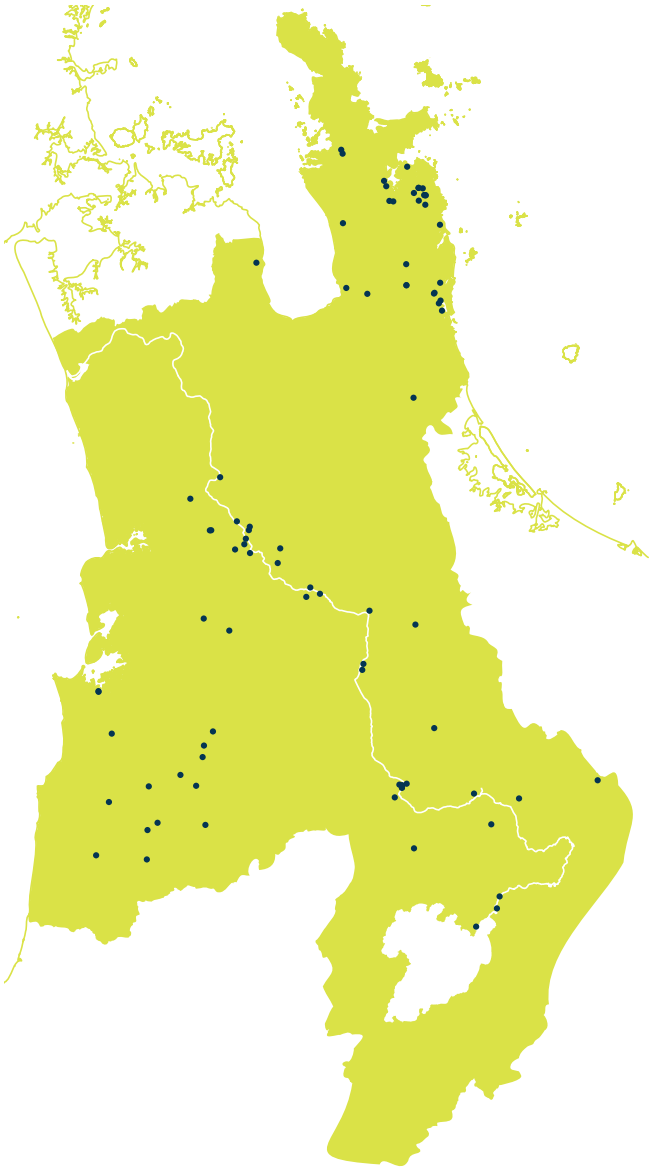


# Wild kiwifruit

(Actinidia spp.)

| RPMP classification     | Area              | Programme status |
|-------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Progressive containment | - Whole of region | At risk          |

| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | ● 12                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Total area of operational sites | ● 5.4ha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Total infestation parent points | ● 85                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Infestation area                | ● 367m²                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Comments                        | <p>There have been 31 new wild kiwifruit sites identified this year as a result of increased general surveillance efforts and targeted surveillance in former and current kiwi fruit growing areas. In 2026, a collaboration agreement between the council and Kiwifruit Vine Health (KVH) was signed. It includes an agreed way of working and a funding split in relation to this pest plant programme. <i>(Tackling wild kiwifruit, page 35.)</i></p> <p>The programme is at risk while council quantifies the extent of this pest plant issue, the nature of the management programme required, and works with KVH to deliver it.</p> |

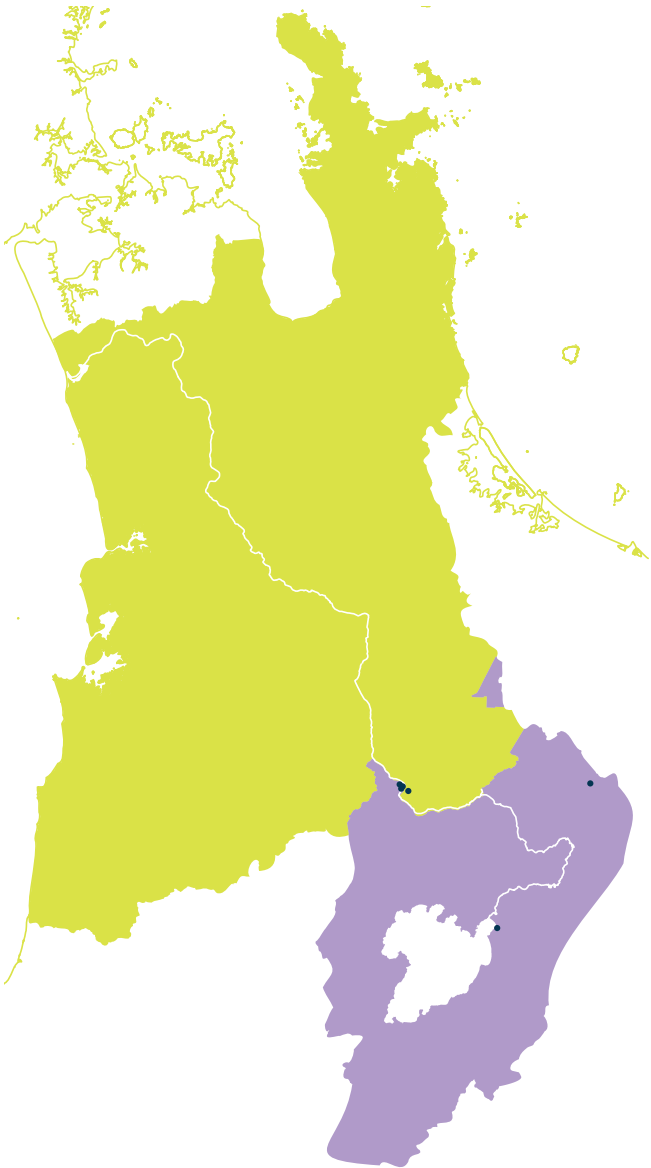
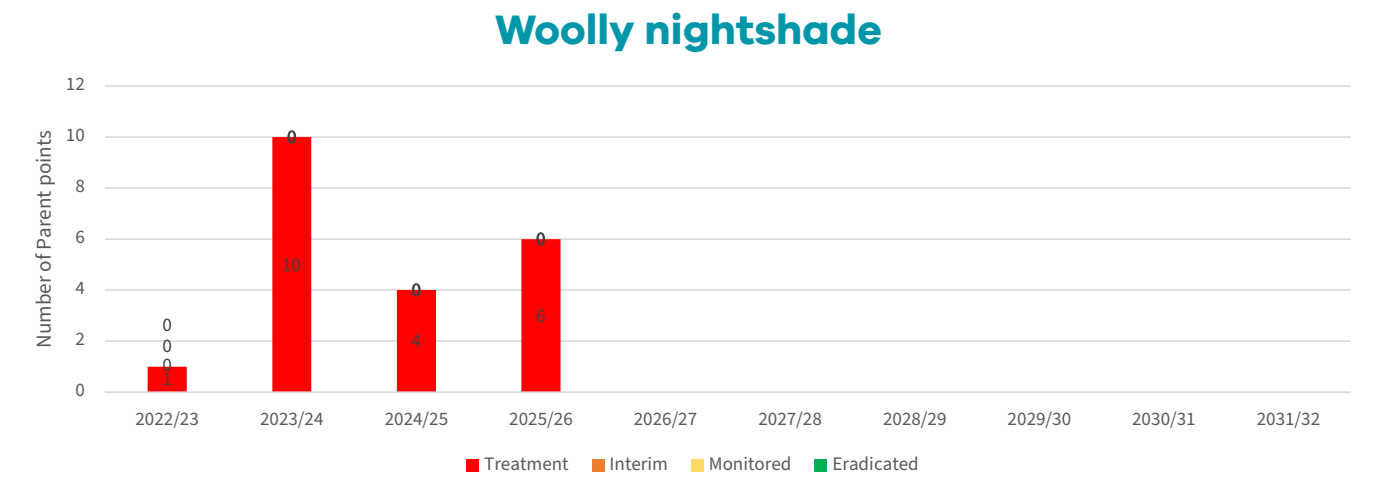


# Woolly nightshade

(*Solanum mauritianum*)

| RPMP classification     | Area                        | Programme status |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Progressive containment | Taupō and Rotorua districts | On track         |

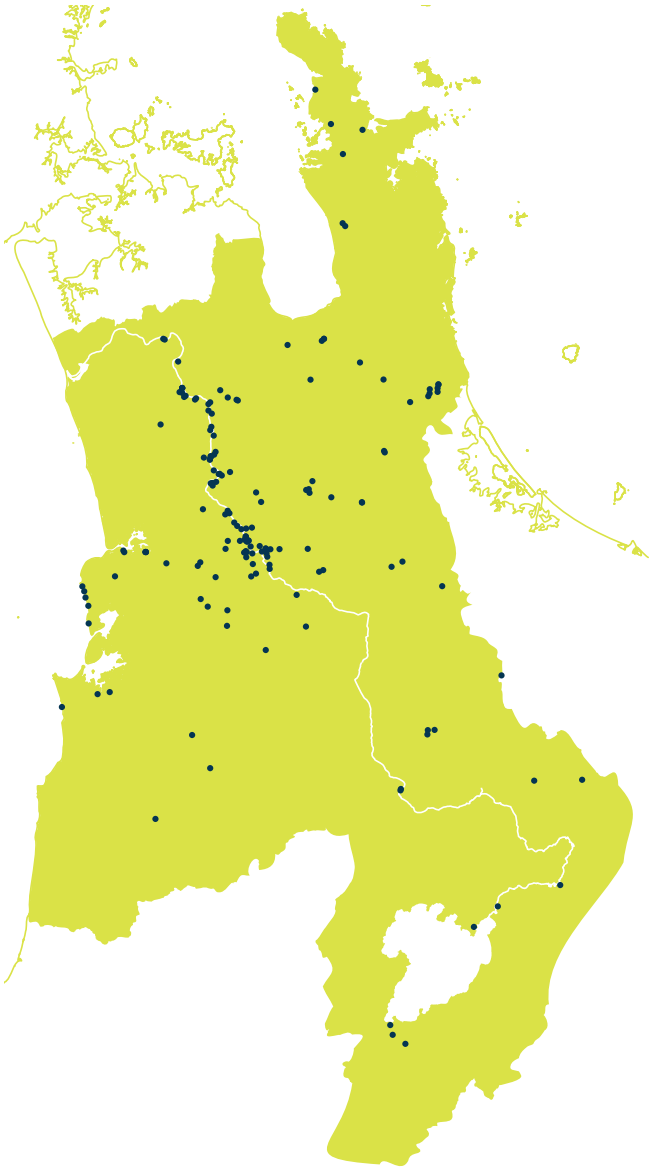
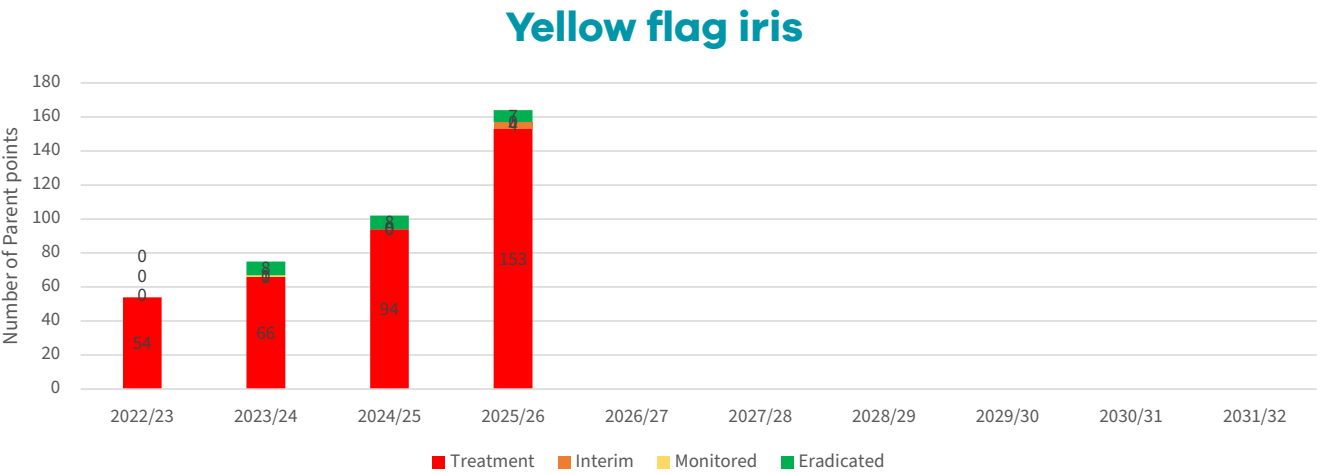
| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Number of operational sites     | 3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Total area of operational sites | 309ha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Total infestation parent points | 6                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Infestation area                | 1723m²                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Comments                        | <p>This programme has met all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i>.</p> <p>Woolly nightshade is a sustained control pest for the rest of the region outside of the Taupō and Rotorua districts, therefore statistics for this species outside these areas are reported on under the key statistics section. (<i>Trio targeted for containment in cooler climes, page 21.</i>)</p> |



# Yellow flag iris

(Iris pseudoacorus)

| RPMP classification             | Area                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Programme status    |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Progressive containment         | Whole of region                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | At risk             |
| Programme summary               | Results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                     |
| Number of operational sites     | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 164                 |
| Total area of operational sites | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 16,442.5ha          |
| Total infestation parent points | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 102                 |
| Infestation area                | ●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 8,357m <sup>2</sup> |
| Comments                        | Yellow flag iris is a significant pest plant in the Waikato region. Not all sites have received the service delivery required to meet all Key Performance Indicators included in the <i>Waikato RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032</i> . <i>(Two decades of managing yellow flag iris at Lake Rotoroa, page 20.)</i> |                     |





African Feather Grass

# Ngā kupu whakamārama

## Glossary

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Key performance indicators | The performance targets set out for each pest management programme within the RPMP Operational Plan 2022-2032, to help determine whether RPMP objectives are being met.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Modified McLean Scale      | A scale used by councils to determine rabbit population levels. It helps with regulation to make sure occupiers are managing rabbit numbers to a level set in the Waikato Regional Pest Management Plan 2022-2032. The RPMP has set the scale for sustainable rabbit control across the Waikato region at level 4 or below.                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Monitoring                 | To observe, measure and record the population levels and trends of a particular pest population.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Operational site           | The area that immediately surrounds an infestation of a pest plant(s), that is most at risk of spread or invasion from that pest. The size of the site is dependent on the pest's reproductive and growth form characteristics, site land use and pertinent environmental factors. The extent of the site may change over time.                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Infestation Parent Points  | Indicates a pest plant infestation within an operational site and contains a record of the data that relates to that point. The pest plant infestation associated with a parent point can cover a large area as long as it lies within the operational site. It can also include areas of eradication.                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Residual trap catch (RTC)  | The residual trap catch (RTC) index is a method of determining relative possum density in an area. Lines of 10 leg-hold traps, spaced 20 metres apart, are set for three consecutive nights in random locations within the operational area. The number of lines used is determined by the size of the management area. The standard performance target commonly set for a reduction in possum densities in ground control operations in the region is an RTC of < 5% and < 3% for aerial operations. |
| Surveillance               | To survey areas to establish the absence, presence, or extent of pests.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |



He taiao mauriora ▲ **Healthy environment**

He hapori hihiri ▲ **Vibrant communities**

He ōhanga pakari ▲ **Strong economy**

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