Pest Management In Our Region

Kia ū te manawa ora o te whenua – Te Oranga Koiora o ngā rohe puta i a Horizons

Protecting our region together – Biosecurity in the Horizons Region

Discussion Document
Open for consultation March-April 2026

horizons
REGIONAL COUNCIL

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Cover: Banana passionfruit.
RPMP progressive containment mapped species.

Kia ū te manawa ora o te whenua – Te Oranga Koiora o ngā rohe puta i a Horizons

Protecting our region together – Biosecurity in the Horizons Region

Horizons Regional Council is reviewing our approach to pest management across the Manawatū-Whanganui region.

Effective biosecurity relies on the people who live and work here. We want your input on what matters most, what's working, and where change may be needed as we review our Regional Pest Management Plan.

Successful pest management depends on shared responsibility, with landowners/occupiers, communities, iwi and hapū, sector partners, and Horizons working together to protect what our region values.

Nothing changes straight away. Existing services and programmes continue as usual while the review process is underway.

Your feedback now will help us refine priorities and options before any proposed plan is drafted.

HAVE YOUR SAY

This document is open for consultation March-April 2026. Have your say at: haveyoursay.horizons.govt.nz

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Why are we reviewing our Regional Pest Management Plan?

Horizons Regional Council (Horizons or Council) is responsible for providing regional leadership in pest management under the Biosecurity Act 1993 (the Act).

Our Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP or the plan) is the main document that sets out how we, together with iwi/hapū, landowners, and other partners, will tackle pest issues across the Manawatū-Whanganui region. The RPMP bridges the gap between the Act and local action.

By law, we must initiate a formal review of the RPMP from 26 September 2027. This is because 10 years will have passed since the plan was last fully reviewed. To initiate the review, Council needs to adopt a proposal document, essentially a draft version of the new plan. This draft must clearly show any changes we're suggesting and why we're suggesting them. To meet the deadline, we are getting things moving early.

The timing of the review is useful. Since the current plan was created, budgets, available control methods, and the pests present in our region have all changed. Pest pressures have shifted, new tools and control methods are available, and funding and delivery models have evolved. These changes mean the Plan needs to adapt to remain effective, practical, and focused on achieving the greatest benefit for the region.

The RPMP remains a critical tool, but it is not the only way biosecurity is delivered in the Horizons Region. Not all emerging or widespread pest issues are best addressed through formal plan rules, and new species cannot be added to the RPMP without a full plan review. Many biosecurity risks are managed through other approaches such as biological control, education, partnerships, and community-led action. This allows a faster and more flexible response where a formal plan change is not required.

Biosecurity Strategic Approach

To support this, Horizons is developing a broader biosecurity strategic approach to sit alongside the next RPMP.

This non-regulatory document will help guide how we prioritise issues, respond to concerns that sit outside the regulatory framework of the RPMP, and work with others to strengthen biosecurity outcomes across the region.

Together, the RPMP and this wider strategic approach will provide a clearer, more coordinated regional framework for managing pests now and into the future.

Climbing alstromeria in flower on a roadside. RPMP eradication species.

The Biosecurity System

Biosecurity is about protecting our environment, economy, people, and biodiversity from harmful pests and diseases. It operates as a system, with different roles at different levels.

Pests and nuisance species can spread through pathways including trade and travel, waterways, and land-uses, and they don't stop at property or council boundaries. Because of this, biosecurity works best when agencies and communities are coordinated and share information, to respond quickly as risks change.

Global and border level
Where international agreements, trade rules, and border controls aim to prevent new pests and diseases from entering the country.

National level
Where central government agencies set national direction, manage high-risk incursions, lead responses to high-risk pests and diseases and help surveillance and transitions to long-term responses.

Regional level
Where regional councils provide regional leadership, coordinate pest management, and manage risks across landscapes and catchments.

Local and community level
Where territorial authorities, iwi and hapū, landowners, industry groups, and community organisations play a critical role in detecting pests, managing impacts, and preventing spread.

Regardless of where a species sits within the system, there are many useful resources available such as iNaturalist, which can assist in identifying a species, and Weedbusters, which has a fantastic A-Z of pest plants and advice on how to control them.

Setting the scene for our region

Our region spans mountains to sea, rural catchments to urban centres, productive farmland to high-value natural areas.

Pest pressures and risks vary widely across these places, and so do the tools needed to manage them. Horizons takes a whole of region approach, linking national direction with local action and supporting a coordinated approach across districts, ecosystems, and communities.

Under the Biosecurity Act, Horizons leads pest management through the RPMP, but our role goes beyond regulation alone. We focus on reducing risk and directing resources where they can make the biggest difference. Engagement to date has highlighted the importance of clear regional leadership that is based on evidence, transparent about trade-offs and supports others to act.

Looking ahead, biosecurity will need to be more proactive, with a strong focus on prevention and early intervention, while continuing to control species already here. We're taking this long-term view with both the RPMP review and the development of the **biosecurity strategic approach**.

Successful outcomes will depend on working together as a region, with effective partnerships, strong local involvement, and consistent, well-informed decision-making.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Question 1

Thinking about biosecurity in our region, which statement best reflects your view? (Select one)

- Focus should be on preventing pests from arriving
- Focus should be on controlling pests that are already here
- Focus should be on sharing responsibility with landowners and communities
- All of the above

Please explain your choice (optional).

Have your say at:
haveyoursay.horizons.govt.nz

A kohuhu tree on Pukeokahu Road with a Horizons bait station in it, full of native *Tupeia antarctica* (Credit: Lorraine Cook)

Understanding if our approach is working

The current RPMP includes four animal species and 55 types of plant species. The 2017-37 RPMP set high-level goals for managing pests.

We're keen to understand if our current RPMP is working, so to help this we prepared an evaluation. The findings live on our website. It found some programmes are successful, while others aren't reaching their goals. We're using this document to explore the issues and recommendations highlighted in the evaluation and want your feedback on what's working and what could be improved.

There will be a further and more detailed round of consultation later on in the process when we have a formal proposal document and more supporting information.

A common theme where programmes aren't reaching their goals is insufficient funding to keep up with the number and spread of the species. The pressures on resources have also changed over the life of the plan, including land-use change such as urban sprawl and afforestation. Some species have no effective control methods, and we have also found new infestations that would require more resources to manage.

As a result, we have focused on the work that gives the most benefit, but still some programmes are not on track to meet their goals.

For the new plan, we want to keep ambitious goals but make them realistic. It will be important that each species has practical and cost-effective control methods available, and that funding will be available in the future.

Key stats of our current RPMP:

The **current** RPMP includes:

4 PEST ANIMALS

55 PEST PLANTS

If you count the species in the RPMP at the **species level**, there are:

70 PEST SPECIES

Ratepayers fund Horizons work on

35

exclusion, **eradication**, and **progressive containment** mapped species, balancing control with affordability.

Note: Some species have common names that relate to multiple species or sub-species that are also classed as pests and are managed together as one.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Question 2

When setting pest management goals in the RPMP, please rank the following in order of priority.

(1 = Highest priority, 5 = lowest priority)

- Being realistic about funding and delivery
- Achieving measurable results
- Protecting the most important places and values
- Setting ambitious long-term goals
- Flexibility to adapt over time

Question 3

Please indicate how you feel about the following statement: (Select one)

Horizons' current approach to pest management addresses the pest issues I see in my area.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Please tell us why you chose this option (optional).

Have your say at:
haveyoursay.horizons.govt.nz

Top: Sniffer dog with Spartina at Manawatū estuary
Bottom: Noogoora Bur. RPMP exclusion species
(Credit: Waikato Regional Council)

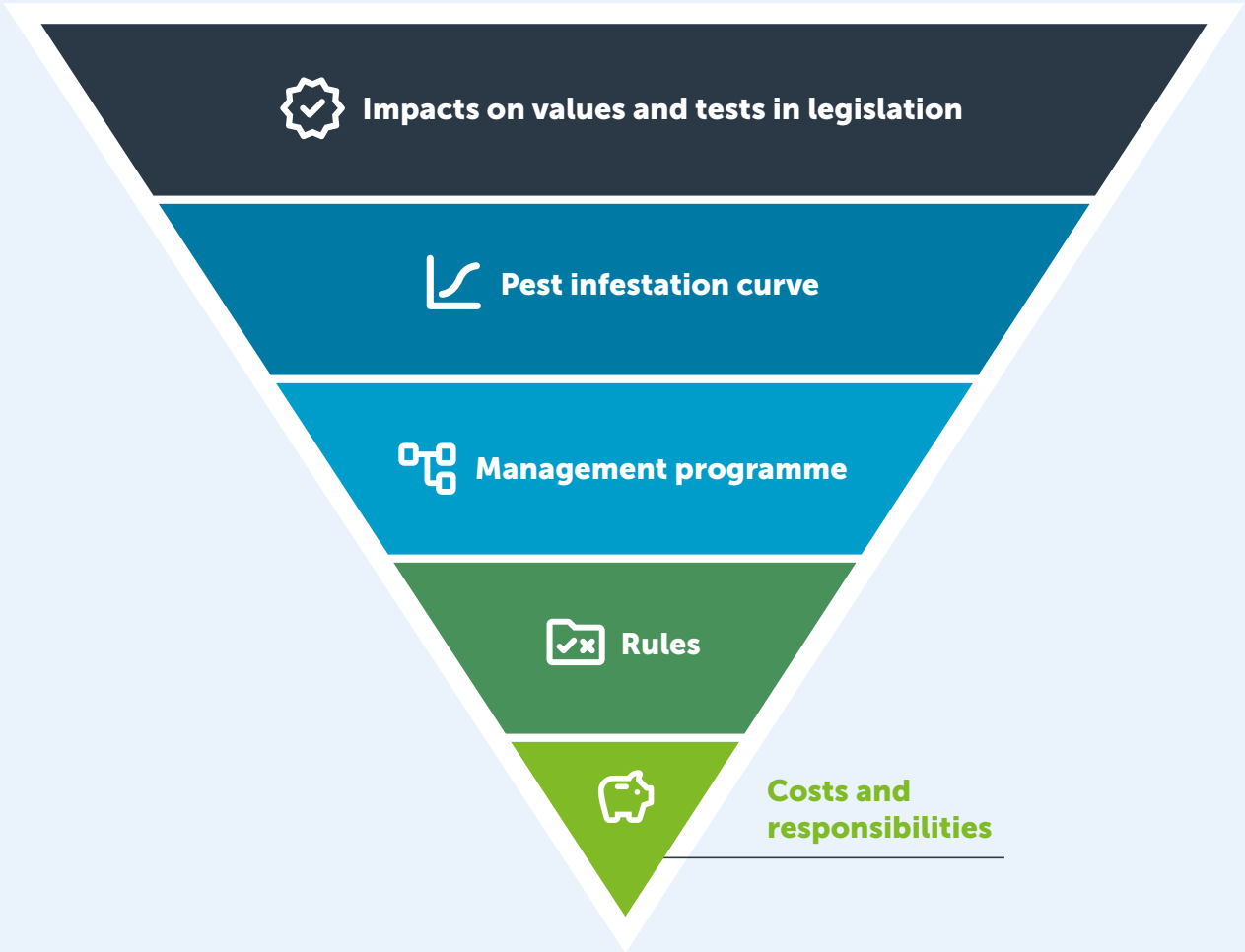
Me pēhea te whakamahi i te Mahere?
How Pest Management Plans work

There are many plants and animals in our region that people see as unwanted or a nuisance.

However, a species can only be included in the RPMP as a pest if it meets specific legal tests. And we can only call it a pest if it is in our plan.

These legal tests include that it must be capable of causing real harm in the region, the RPMP must be more effective than relying on voluntary action, and the benefits of managing it through the plan must be greater than the costs. Species that don't meet these tests can still be managed in other ways. This is discussed in the section on What happens when a species can't be included in the RPMP?

This diagram shows the different tests a pest species must go through to be included in the RPMP.



We're bound by legislation

The Biosecurity Act sets strict criteria for deciding whether a species can be included in the RPMP.

A species can only be added if it can cause harm in our region (now or in the future) to at least one of the following values set out in the Biosecurity Act:

- Economic wellbeing
- The viability of threatened species of organisms
- The survival and distribution of indigenous plants or animals
- The sustainability of natural and developed ecosystems, ecological processes, and biological diversity
- Soil resources
- Water quality
- Human health
- Social and cultural wellbeing
- The enjoyment of the recreational value of the natural environment
- The relationship between Māori, their culture, and their traditions and their ancestral lands, waters, sites, wāhi tapu, and taonga; and
- Animal welfare.

In addition, Council must be confident that including the species in the RPMP is the right approach. This means they must be satisfied that:

- The RPMP is an effective way to manage the species
- The benefits of including the species outweigh the costs
- The approach is consistent with legislation and other plans
- There is an effective control tool available for each species
- The plan is funded by those who either benefit overall or are contributing to the problem being addressed
- There is likely to be enough funding to implement the plan for at least the next five years.

Climbing spindleberry. RPMP eradication species.

The RPMP has limits

The RPMP is a regulatory tool under the Biosecurity Act. It can set rules for specific pests and set rules for most landowners/ occupiers, but it can't solve every biosecurity issue on its own. Some nuisance species can't legally be included as pests in the RPMP, and some outcomes rely on coordinated action.

The National Policy Direction on Pest Management (NPD) allows Horizons to include "good neighbour rules" in limited situations. These rules require a landowner to manage a pest if it would otherwise spread to nearby land and cause unreasonable costs for neighbours who are already doing their part to control it.

Good neighbour rules are the only way the RPMP can require the Crown to take action.

This means Horizons can only require control on the boundary of Crown land.

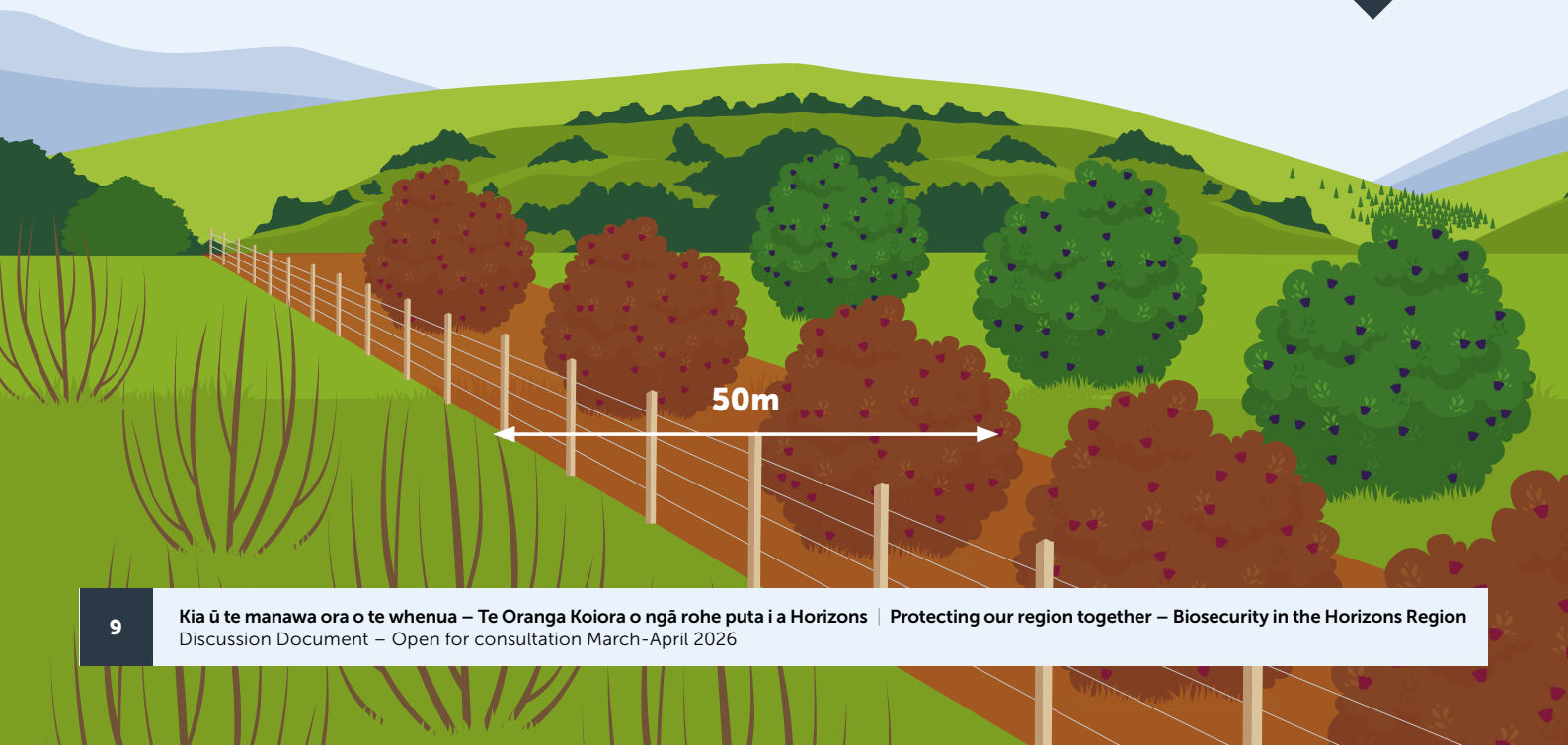
Our region consists of more than 2.2 million hectares. Over 1.7 million hectares of this is made up of private land, around 400,000 hectares of this is Crown land, and just over 90,000 hectares is waterbodies, transport corridors, and other unclassified land. Crown land, where we cannot require control other than on the boundary, makes up a significant portion of the region.

Horizons generally focuses pest management work on rateable land so that the people who pay for pest management are the ones who receive the benefits of that work.

Example of a good neighbour rule in the current RPMP:

Property A
Has had blackberry controlled on their property.

Property B
Must control the blackberry plants on their property that are within 50m of Property A.



Why have a RPMP?

Horizons is required to review the RPMP, but we are not required to have one.

Pest control could be carried out voluntarily by occupiers and community groups, or on an opt-in basis by Horizons officers, still funded through rates. However, a formal RPMP enables a clear and coordinated approach across the region, with rules and expectations that guide where and how pests are managed and funded through general and targeted rates, as appropriate.

Many aspects of the current plan are working effectively. We have seen that when control is carried out consistently, it works well, but its effectiveness can be reduced if some properties do not act.

We believe having a RPMP is the most effective way to protect the things our region values while making the best use of regional resources.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Question 4

Imagine you are an occupier with pests spreading from an adjacent property. How important is it to you to have rules under a RPMP to ensure pests are controlled on that property? (Select one)

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not important at all
- Not sure

Please explain your choice.

Have your say at:
haveyoursay.horizons.govt.nz

Old Man's Beard (OMB) control. OMB is a RPMP progressive containment species.

How can the RPMP work in practise?

There is a spectrum of approaches to implementing pest management under a RPMP.

Some species require landscape scale control to be effective, others can be managed on a site-by-site basis, and some require certain control tools. There are species, such as rooks which are explored through Snapshot into eradication of animals: Rooks, where using other control methods could be detrimental to controlling the pest.

Horizons sits towards the left of the spectrum. Our officers carry out control for exclusion and eradication species, and for progressive containment mapped species within active management zones, where it makes the most sense and budgets allow.

Outside these areas, including for sustained control species, occupiers are responsible for control. The progressive containment programmes include some boundary rules enforceable under the plan on a complaints basis. This approach allows staff to focus on species that pose the greatest risk and are not yet widespread.

We believe this model provides the most direct value for ratepayers, delivering control on the ground while still relying on occupiers to alert us to issues and carry out some control work.

Enforcement is currently used selectively as it can be time consuming and has a cost to ratepayers. In general, we see officer time as more effectively spent actively controlling pests rather than issuing notices. We are seeking feedback on whether this balance between council-led work and occupier responsibility is appropriate.

A spectrum of approaches to the RPMP:

Councils can deliver all control work themselves

- Rates fund biosecurity officers to do the work on the ground
- No obligation on occupiers apart from granting access

Councils can require landowners to do all control work

- Rates fund enforcement officers to enforce compliance
- Council do not carry out control

Level of Council involvement

HAVE YOUR SAY

Question 5

If you could divide responsibility for pest control along a spectrum from 0% (occupiers do all control, Horizons provides advice/enforcement only) to 100% (Horizons does all control, occupiers grant access to their land and assist with reporting), where do you think the balance should be?

0% 50% 100%

Why do you think the balance should be at this point on the spectrum?

Question 6

How would you rank enforcement compared with other pest management approaches?

(1 = Highest priority, 4 = lowest priority)

- Enforcement on occupiers
- Support and guidance for occupiers
- Education and awareness campaigns
- Funding or incentives for control

Have your say at:
haveyoursay.horizons.govt.nz

Top: Blue passion flower. RPMP eradication species.
Bottom: Nodding thistle. RPMP progressive containment non-mapped species.

Te tūtakitakinga o te whakaaro ki ngā uara o te oranga koiora
Understanding biosecurity values

Our current RPMP has focused mostly on environmental and production pests. However, we can consider a range of values as part of the review.

When we manage pests, it's important to think about the things people value and rely on in our region.

What are the values we are asking about?

The Biosecurity Act sets out the values we can consider when deciding what pests to include and how to manage them. These are:

- Economic wellbeing
- The viability of threatened species of organisms
- The survival and distribution of indigenous plants or animals
- The sustainability of natural and developed ecosystems, ecological processes, and biological diversity
- Soil resources
- Water quality
- Human health
- Social and cultural wellbeing
- The enjoyment of the recreational value of the natural environment
- The relationship between Māori, their culture, and their traditions and their ancestral lands, waters, sites, wāhi tapu, and taonga; and
- Animal welfare.

We have heard through pre-engagement with key partners and stakeholders that impacts on environmental values are front of mind.

Purple Loosestrife at Punahau Lake Horowhenua. RPMP eradication species.

Purple loosestrife

Purple loosestrife *(Lythrum salicaria)* is present at low levels in the region, but its potential impacts on environmental values are significant.

Found mainly in gardens and amenity ponds in the lower part of the region, this plant can quickly invade damp ground and shallow water. It forms dense, tall stands that overtop natives and displace other vegetation.

In the Horowhenua, it has been found around the lake and in nearby wetlands and the Hokio Stream. This plant degrades wetland and marginal habitats, reduces food sources for fish and bird species, and can increase flood risk.

Purple loosestrife

Variegated thistle

Variegated thistle *(Silybum marianum)* is widespread in the region and can significantly impact economic wellbeing.

This progressive containment plant grows rapidly, forming large clumps that outcompete desirable pasture species and is unpalatable and toxic to stock.

Management mainly occurs under the clear land and good neighbour rules, which require landowners to control the plant where it affects neighbouring properties. There is no biocontrol available, so consistent herbicide application is the primary method of control.

Most farmers manage variegated thistle themselves, while Horizons officers respond to complaints when necessary.

Variegated thistle

HAVE YOUR SAY

Question 7

Please rank the following values from most threatened to least threatened by pest/nuisance plants and animals in our region:

(1 = Highest priority, 11 = lowest priority)

- Economic wellbeing
- The viability of threatened species of organisms
- The survival and distribution of indigenous plants or animals
- The sustainability of natural and developed ecosystems, ecological processes, and biological diversity
- Soil resources
- Water quality
- Human health
- Social and cultural wellbeing
- The enjoyment of the recreational value of the natural environment
- The relationship between Māori, their culture, and their traditions and their ancestral lands, waters, sites, wāhi tapu, and taonga
- Animal welfare

Question 8

How concerned are you about the impacts of pests/nuisance species on these values? (Select one)

- Very concerned
- Moderately concerned
- A little concerned
- Not concerned
- Not sure

Please tell us why you chose this option (optional).

Have your say at:
haveyoursay.horizons.govt.nz

Tutsan (St John's wort). RPMP progressive containment non-mapped species.

Me pēhea te whakamahi ngā hōtaka whakahaere
How management programmes work

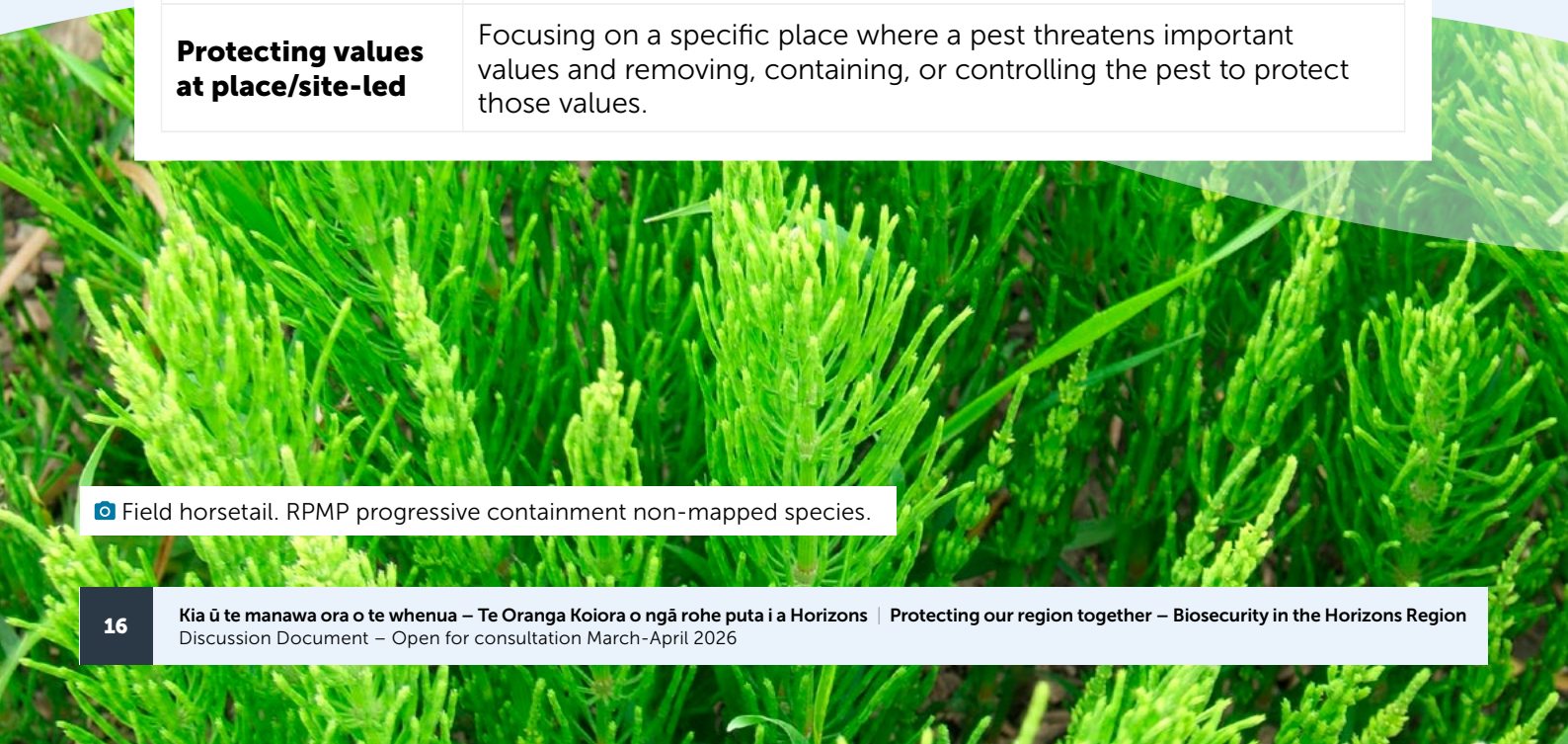
The current RPMP has guided coordinated action across the region and achieved meaningful results for many species, particularly where early action, consistent effort, and collaboration are possible.

Set management programmes

The proposal for the RPMP cannot be inconsistent with the National Policy Direction (NPD). The NPD sets national requirements for how pest plans must be designed. This includes how programmes are set, how costs are shared, and how rules work.

Under the NPD, pests must fit into one or more of the following programmes:

Programme	Outcome
Exclusion	Stopping a pest that exists somewhere in New Zealand from becoming established in a specific area.
Eradication	Removing a pest from an area within the short- to medium-term.
Progressive containment	Limiting or shrinking the area where a pest is found over time.
Sustained control	Ongoing control to reduce a pest's impacts and limit its spread to other properties.
Protecting values at place/site-led	Focusing on a specific place where a pest threatens important values and removing, containing, or controlling the pest to protect those values.

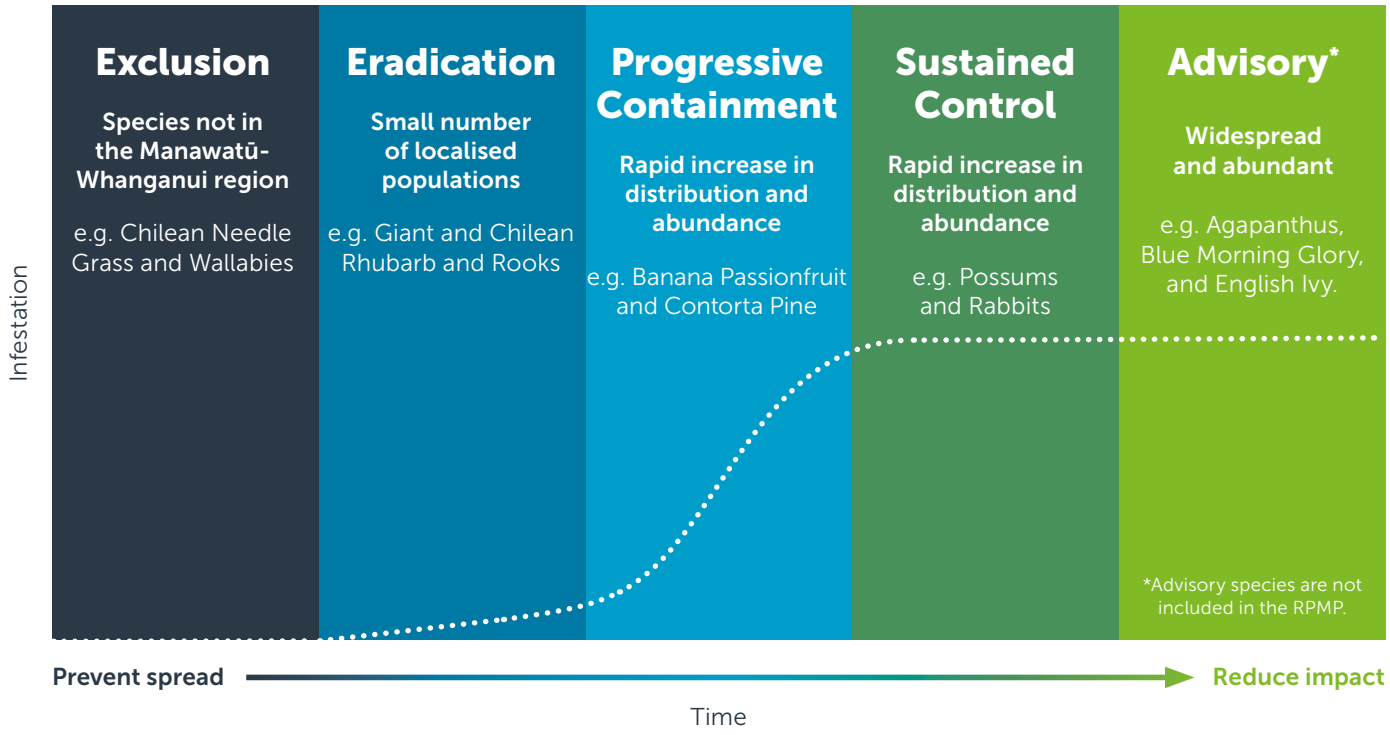


Field horsetail. RPMP progressive containment non-mapped species.

Pest infestation curve

The pest infestation curve is a useful framework for determining which management programme under the National Policy Direction for Pest Management 2015 (NPD) is most suitable for a species. Pests caught early are generally easier and cheaper to manage, while those well-established are harder, more costly, and less likely to be eradicated.

Pest infestation curve



Nassella tussock in Ōhura. RPMP eradication species.

Wallabies

Wallabies are not currently established in the Horizons Region but would pose significant environmental and economic risks if they became established.

Horizons operates an exclusion management programme that treats any wallaby sighting or evidence as a priority and triggers an immediate response.

When a dead wallaby was found in the Ruapehu District in June 2023, Horizons worked with specialist detector dog contractors to carry out extensive searches of the surrounding area and investigate a nearby reported sighting. No further evidence was found, indicating the incident was isolated.

This response reflects the region's precautionary approach, which focuses on early detection, rapid response, and close coordination with national programmes and neighbouring regions to prevent wallabies from establishing.

Wallaby search dog at Waimiha

Any sightings or signs of wallabies anywhere in Aotearoa New Zealand should be reported to Biosecurity New Zealand. This can be done online at **www.reportwallabies.nz.**

Boneseed (Credit: Carolyn Lewis)

Gunnera (Giant and Chilean Rhubarb)

Gunnera (Giant and Chilean Rhubarb, *Gunnera tinctoria, G. manicata* and all varieties) is a significant threat to cliff, wetland, and riparian ecosystems, spreading quickly by seed and rhizomes, and shading out native plants. It can also block drains, limit access to natural areas, and contribute to erosion.

The RPMP's eradication programme targets known infestations through regular treatment and monitoring. These coordinated efforts have reduced gunnera at managed sites and continue to prevent its establishment at new locations.

The eradication programme focuses on early intervention to limit spread and protect high-value habitats.

Mature Gunnera

Think you may have spotted Gunnera? Give us a call on freephone **0508 800 800** and let us know where you've spotted it. This is a plant we really don't want taking root in our region!

Himalayan balsam

Himalayan balsam *(Impatiens glandulifera)* is a fast-growing plant that produces up to 2,500 seeds per plant. Its seeds spread quickly by water and can stay viable for over 18 months. This allows it to establish along waterways, wetlands, forest edges, gullies, and other moist, sunny areas. The plant competes with native vegetation and can dominate stream banks, leaving them bare and prone to erosion over winter.

Horizons' eradication programme targets the 20 known sites in the region, with regular monitoring and follow-up control.

New infestations are occasionally found, but the seedbank remains small and manageable, and ongoing work is maintaining progress towards eliminating the species across the region.

Himalayan Balsam in Manakau

Think you may have spotted Himalayan Balsam? Give us a call on freephone **0508 800 800** and let us know where you've spotted it. This is a plant we really don't want taking root in our region!

Snapshot into eradication of animals

Rooks

The rook eradication programme in the region is on track to meet its goal of eradicating breeding rookeries and progressively contain or reduce rooks across the region by 2027.

Rooks are a serious pest for agriculture and horticulture as they can damage crops and reduce pasture productivity, leading to economic losses.

Horizons has reduced the number of active rookeries from 2942 in 2005 to 79 in 2025.

Only Horizons' operators should undertake rook control. The best method of control is aerial treatment of nesting sites which requires access to treetops. Other methods of control risk disturbance and further dispersal of birds to new areas.

Progress has been driven by coordinated control efforts during breeding season, including aerial treatment of nesting sites, with year-round responses to sightings. Shared knowledge and collaboration with neighbouring councils have strengthened efforts.

Landowners/occupiers must report rookeries to Horizons' pest animal team on freephone **0508 800 800** or email **PCO@horizons.govt.nz**.

Control of rooks must be carried out by experienced operators – do not take any action to hunt rooks yourself.

Snapshot into progressive containment

Banana passionfruit

Banana passionfruit *(Passiflora tripartita (all varieties), P. tarminiana, P. mixta, P. pinnatistipula, P. x rosea)* can affect the survival and distribution of indigenous plants and animals as well as the sustainability of natural ecosystems.

It is a fast-growing vine that can have major impacts on native ecosystems. It forms dense growth that smothers plants and prevents natives from establishing.

Horizons manages banana passionfruit under a progressive containment mapped programme, with officers undertaking control in the active management zone.

The programme focuses on gradually decreasing the spread of the species and protecting high-value ecosystems.

Regular monitoring and control are carried out where budgets allow. Control can be difficult where access is limited, particularly in carbon forestry areas where pines are sensitive to herbicide.

Banana passionfruit vine on a tree

Possums

Possums are a widespread pest in our region, affecting native plants and animals, agriculture, forestry, and can spread diseases including bovine tuberculosis, *Giardia*, *Cryptosporidium*, and *Leptospira*.

Horizons runs a large sustained control possum control programme, funded by ratepayers, and takes over new operations as OSPRI withdraws from land, where funding is available.

The programme includes 166 operations, over 210,000 bait stations, and more than 100,000 refills every year. Monitoring consistently shows possum numbers below the target of 10% residual trap catch, demonstrating that the programme is effective.

A recent social return on investment analysis showed that every $1 invested by Horizons delivered $1.63 in social benefit.

While some public conservation land remains untreated, and land-use changes or opt-outs can limit overall effectiveness, the sustained control programme shows how coordinated, long-term efforts can deliver measurable results for our region.

Example of success

Angus' farm in Taihape has been part of the programme since 2012. By 2022, residual trap catch was 0.9%.

Native plants have flourished: dwarf mistletoe (*Korthalsella clavata*) is now abundant, young maire trees are fruiting heavily, and tōtara trees are showing new growth that was previously heavily browsed by possums.

Top: Possum damage.
Bottom: Angus pointing out the dwarf mistletoe growing on his property

HAVE YOUR SAY

Question 9

Which programme outcomes do you feel should be prioritised most through the RPMP? (Select all that apply)

- Preventing high-risk pests from establishing in the region (exclusion)
- Removing pests from specific areas where it's still achievable (eradication)
- Reducing the spread of pests that are established in parts of the region (progressive containment)
- Limiting the impacts of widespread pests through ongoing control (sustained control)
- Protecting high-value places and sites (site-led protection)
- Not sure

Have your say at:
haveyoursay.horizons.govt.nz

Top: Gorse. RPMP progressive containment non-mapped species.
Bottom: Woolly nightshade in a paddock. RPMP eradication species.

Te whakatōmene i ngā ture o te Mahere Kīrearea ā-Rohe
Exploring Regional Pest Management Plan rules

The RPMP uses different types of rules to manage pest plants and animals across the region.

Horizons focuses its direct control on species that are most harmful but not yet widespread, often relying on timely reporting from occupiers and agencies through rules like the duty to inform.

Other rules help ensure that pests which are more common or likely to spread are managed through boundary-focused measures, such as the good neighbour and clear land rules.

The plan also allows for approved management plans for occupiers and agencies, and includes specific rules like the rookery management rule, the wallaby rule, and provisions for wilding conifers in the Karioi Forest Zone.

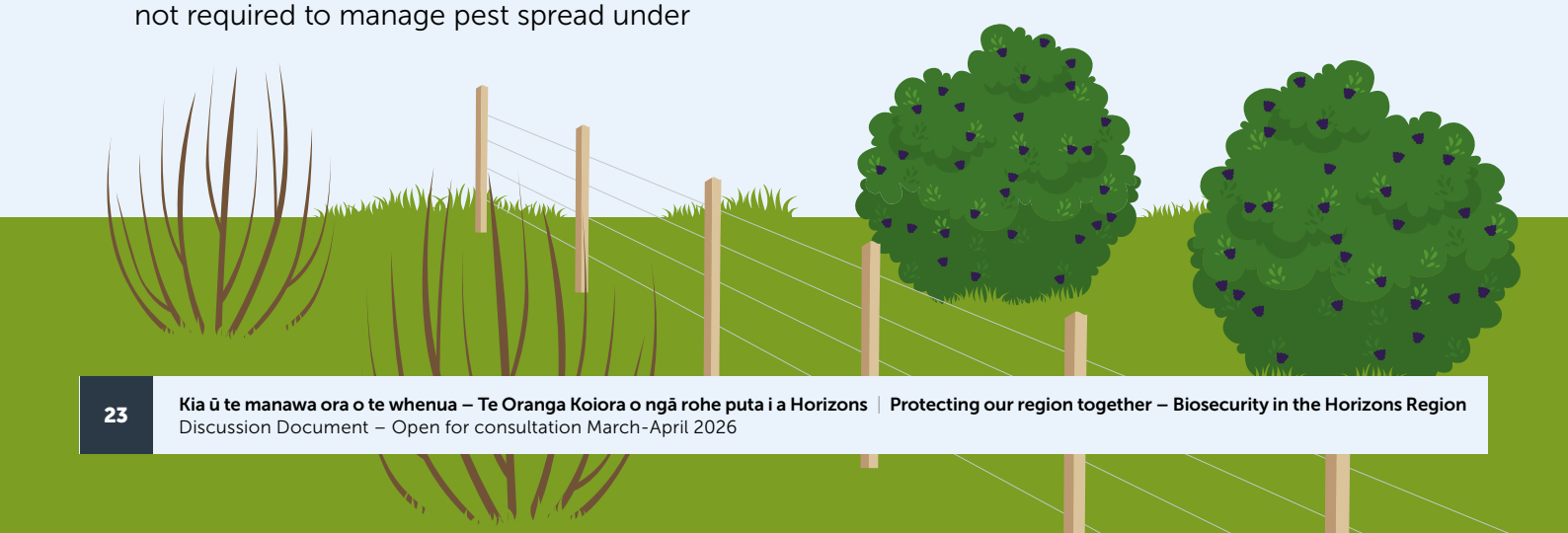
The good neighbour rule is the only rule that can be applied to Crown land.

What size land should be protected by the rules?

Under the current RPMP, the clear land and good neighbour rules apply to progressive containment species that are not mapped. These rules require landowners of properties over 4-hectares (4-ha) to manage pests so that they do not spread to neighbouring land, but only if the adjacent property is taking reasonable measures to control the pests.

The 4-ha threshold was originally intended to focus on areas where pest spread could have clear economic impacts and where the required effort was considered proportionate. In practice, the rule drafting has created an unintended gap: smaller properties are not required to manage pest spread under these rules, even where spread from smaller properties can affect neighbouring land or nearby productive areas. In urban and lifestyle areas, the impacts can be different, urban areas generally do not suffer significant economic harm from pest plants, although there is a risk that pests could spread to productive land nearby.

We are seeking your feedback on what size of land should be protected under the clear land and good neighbour rules.



HAVE YOUR SAY

Question 10

In your view, the property size threshold for the clear land and good neighbour rules should: (Select one)

- Apply to smaller properties than it does now
- Stay about the same as it is now
- Apply only to larger properties than it does now
- Be removed entirely
- Not sure

Question 11

Which approach to funding the implementation of these rules do you think is the most appropriate for Horizons to take? (Select one)

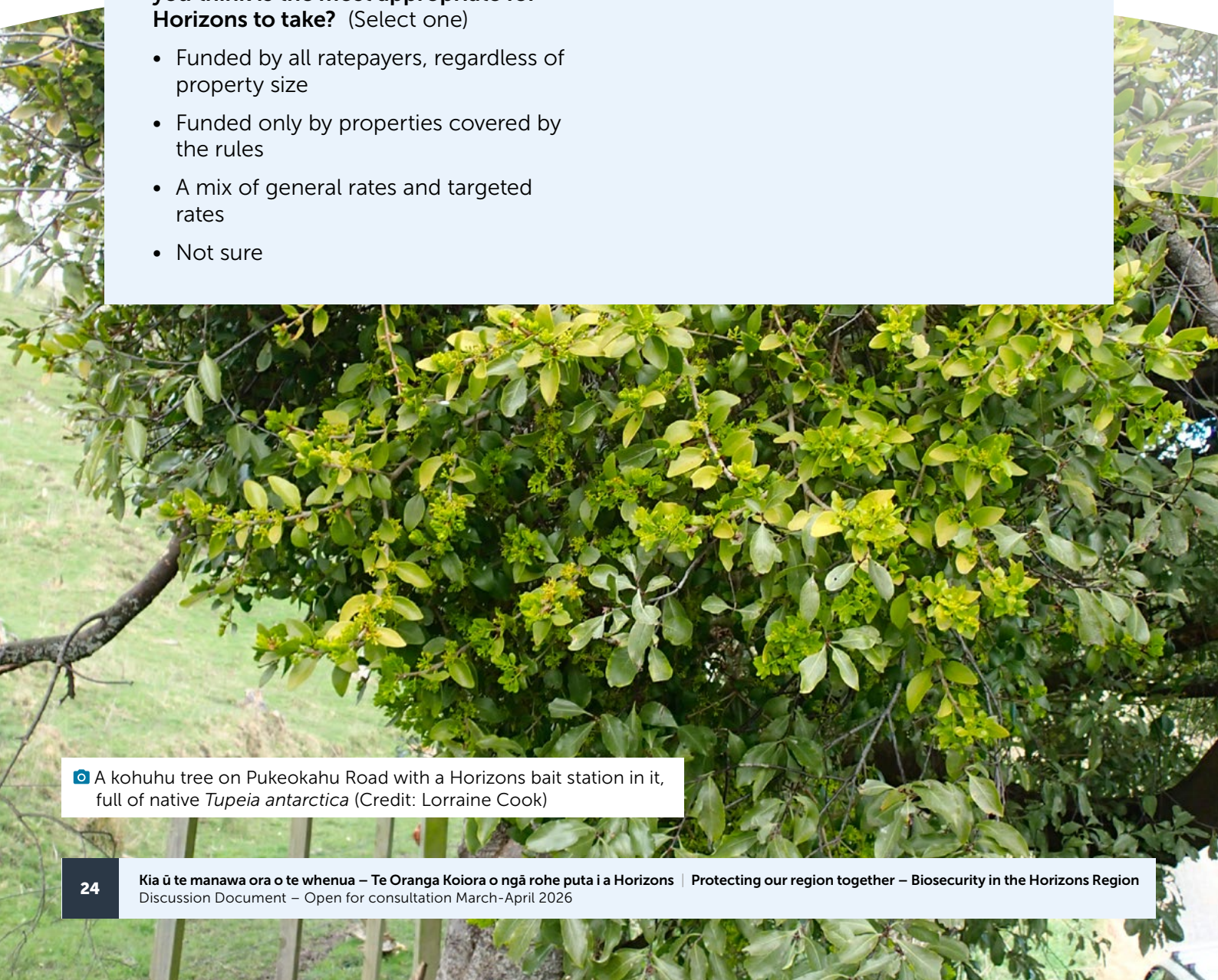
- Funded by all ratepayers, regardless of property size
- Funded only by properties covered by the rules
- A mix of general rates and targeted rates
- Not sure

Question 12

Please tell us more about your answers on property size and how these rules should be funded. For example, you could explain:

- Why you chose the property size threshold you did.
- Whether you think smaller properties should contribute to rule implementation, and why.
- Anything else we should consider regarding fairness, practicality, or local impacts.

Have your say at:
haveyoursay.horizons.govt.nz



A kohuhu tree on Pukeokahu Road with a Horizons bait station in it, full of native *Tupeia antarctica* (Credit: Lorraine Cook)

E wero ana mātou i te tika?
Are we managing the right things?

Since the current RPMP became operative, the pest landscape has continued to change in our region. New species have arrived through natural spread or human activity, and Horizons receives ongoing feedback from communities about species they are concerned about, and think should be considered in the plan.

It is not possible to manage every pest everywhere at once, therefore, giving early attention to the highest-risk species and sites can help prevent problems from becoming more widespread and costly over time.

At the same time, some long-established pests have changed in their impact, through increased numbers, wider spread, land-use change, new control options, or shifts in community expectations.

With limited resources, pest management needs to be prioritised, so effort is focused where it delivers the greatest benefit for the values our region wants to protect.

Spotlight on a threat to cropping

Velvetleaf

We hear from a lot of people that velvetleaf (*Abutilon theophrasti*) is an issue.

It was previously managed under a national response programme led by the Ministry for Primary Industries. This has now ended, meaning ongoing responsibility sits with regional councils and occupiers. Horizons already manages velvetleaf as a serious cropping weed.

It spreads easily through stock movement, contaminated machinery, and seed or feed, and is well known internationally for causing major crop yield losses. It produces a very long-lived seed bank, with seed remaining viable in soil for decades, which makes it difficult to manage once established. Infestations in the region have so far been contained. Its limited distribution means there may still be an opportunity to prevent wider spread if managed carefully.

Velvetleaf detector dog

Sea spurge

Sea spurge (*Euphorbia paralias*) has drifted to Aotearoa within the past few years, with small incursions recently detected along parts of the coast.

Although sites are currently few, this species is highly invasive in sensitive dune systems. It spreads unpredictably, establishes quickly, and can push out native plants, changing how these fragile areas function.

Horizons is already part of a national multi-agency programme led by MPI, with support from DOC and regional councils. This programme has shown that physical and chemical control methods are effective when infestations are detected early. Because regional councils are likely to manage sea spurge long-term, early action is expected to be more cost-effective than waiting for it to spread further.

Top: Sea spurge at Waikawa Beach
Bottom: Sea spurge

Golden clam

Golden clam (*Corbicula fluminea*) has not been found in our region, but it is present in the neighbouring Waikato region and poses a significant risk if it spreads.

The species reproduces rapidly, releasing thousands of juveniles that are as small as 0.2 mm, making early detection challenging.

Horizons is already involved in a coordinated and proactive approach to prevent golden clam arriving in the region.

Ngā Tāngata Tiaki o Whanganui instigated a collective approach with Horizons, MPI, DOC, Whanganui and Ruapehu District Councils, and Genesis Energy as partners to the Whanganui River Invasive Clam Response Plan. The plan aims to prevent spread to the Whanganui River and nearby waterways with advocacy, concession conditions and proactive surveillance.

If established, golden clams can harm native freshwater species, change water chemistry, and interfere with water treatment processes. They are also known to clog irrigation systems, water treatment plants, hydroelectric infrastructure, and other water intakes.

Without a control method, this species can't go into the RPMP. The best approach is to stop them from arriving. Simple actions like check, clean, dry, for boats, trailers, and other equipment can help prevent spread.

If you think you have seen the freshwater golden clam, please report sightings to Biosecurity New Zealand on **0800 80 99 66** or online at **report@mpi.govt.nz**.

You will need to provide a precise location, close-up photo of the clam as well as its surroundings.

Top: Golden clam with a $2 coin
Bottom: African feathergrass. RPMP eradication species.

Feral animals

Feral animals are a complex issue in our region. They raise ecological, production, and social considerations.

Some species, such as deer, goats, and pigs, provide a source of food and recreation for some people. At the same time their numbers and behaviour can harm native ecosystems, production land, and urban areas. Populations of these animals are increasing in some parts of the region, and their impacts can be significant even at relatively low densities.

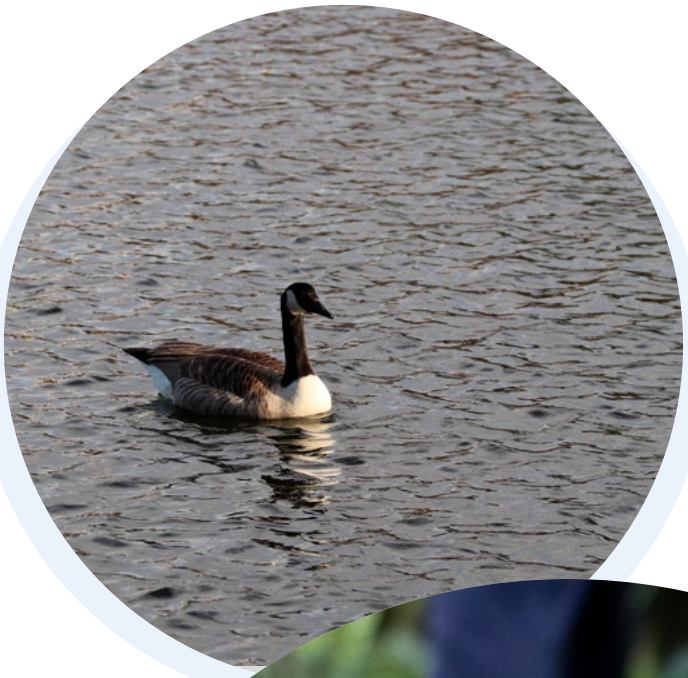
Deer in particular are a species we hear about frequently: their selective browsing can alter forest composition, reduce regeneration of palatable plants, and increase the abundance of unpalatable species. They can also damage pastures, crops, and forestry, and act as vectors for bovine tuberculosis. Some people enjoy seeing deer in the wild, while others are concerned about their impacts.

Effective management of feral deer is challenging. Unlike possums and rabbits, there are no established, cost-effective methods for reliably measuring deer populations. This makes it harder to regulate or enforce control. Methods such as culling or fencing are costly, labour-intensive, and require careful planning.

If Horizons were to expand its role in deer management, questions arise around funding, including whether landowners would be prepared to be rated for this work and subject to enforcement requirements.

Feral cats play a complex role in our region. Many domestic cats are beloved pets. Owned and stray cats aren't the cats we are talking about. Feral cats live independently of humans and rely on hunting to survive. They are skilled predators, feeding on native birds, bats, lizards, and insects, and can carry diseases such as toxoplasmosis, which can affect humans, livestock, and marine mammals.

Canada geese are increasingly reported in parts of the region, particularly Tararua, Horowhenua, and Turakina. They can impact production, water quality, and amenity areas. Eradication would likely need a national or multi-regional approach. Any regional management would require careful consideration of costs, community involvement, and monitoring.



Top: Canada goose at Hokowhitu lagoon
Bottom: Deer browsing damage on hen and chicken fern

HAVE YOUR SAY

Question 13

How important do you think it is for Horizons to manage feral animals in the region? (Select one)

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not very important
- Not important at all
- Don't know

Question 14

Would you support funding feral animal (e.g. deer, goats, pigs, cats, and canada geese) management through your rates if it meant Horizons could act to reduce populations? (Select one)

- Definitely
- Maybe, depending on costs
- No
- Don't know

Please explain your answer.

Question 15

Considering the challenges of deer control, do you think Horizons should take an active role in deer management? (Select one)

- Definitely
- Maybe, depending on costs
- No
- Don't know

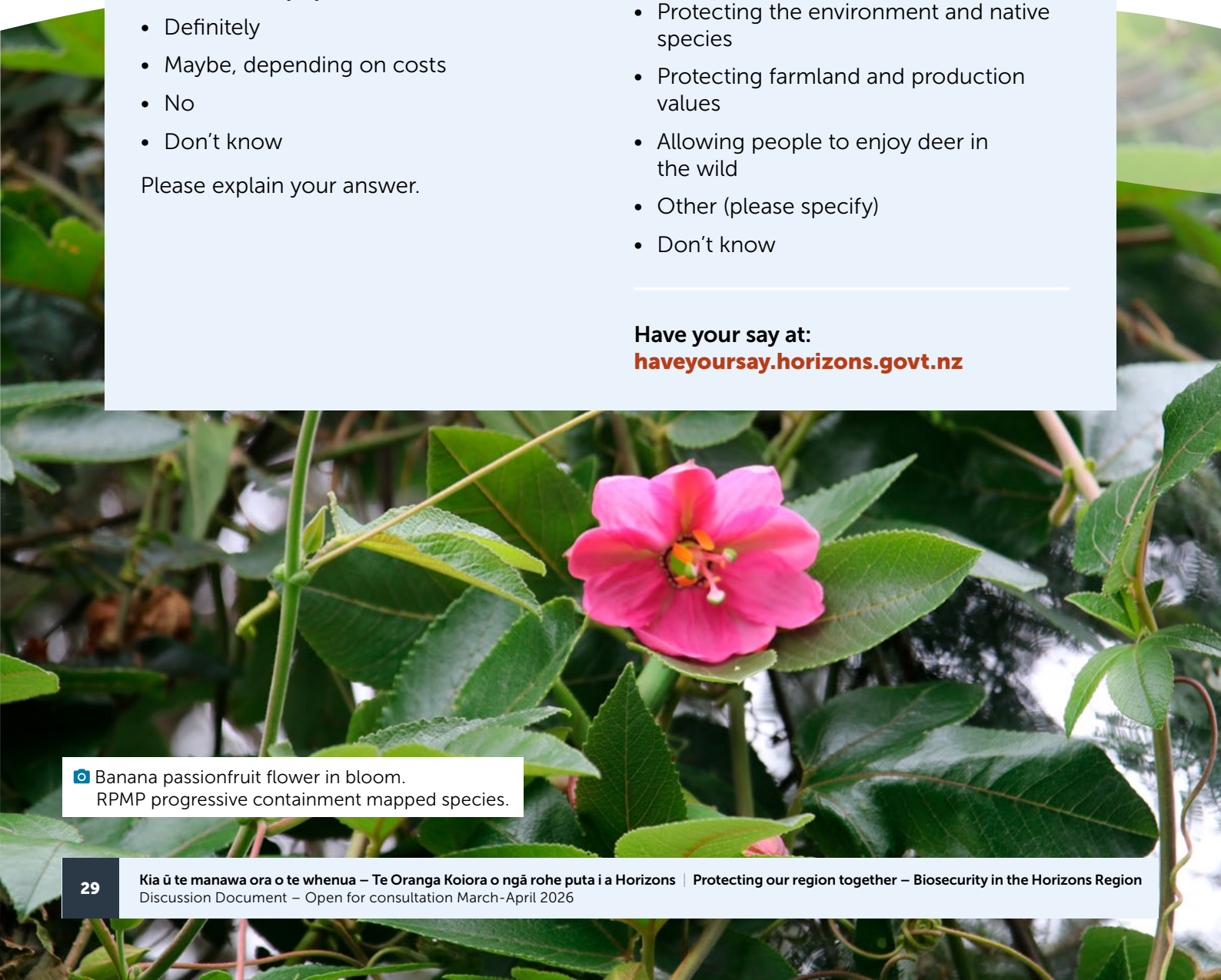
Please explain your answer.

Question 16

What should Horizons focus on when deciding how deer should be managed? (Select all that apply)

- Protecting the environment and native species
- Protecting farmland and production values
- Allowing people to enjoy deer in the wild
- Other (please specify)
- Don't know

Have your say at:
haveyoursay.horizons.govt.nz



Banana passionfruit flower in bloom.
RPMP progressive containment mapped species.

Phragmites karka (Elephant grass)

Phragmites karka is a large, fast-growing plant that resembles bamboo. It can change waterway ecosystems, block channels, and increase the risks of flooding.

In our region, infestations have been recorded in several locations, including the Whangaehu, Rangitīkei, and Ōroua rivers, the Wairarawa stream in Waitārere, and at Awahuri Forest Kitchener Park in the Manawatū.

Trials to control *Phragmites karka* have been undertaken with support from Horizons' Kanorau Koiora Taketake Fund, totalling $161,300 over four years, to develop and scale up control methods. The most effective approach involved cutting each stem and applying high concentrations of herbicide. This method can reduce the levels of the plant, but it is expensive in terms of labour, equipment, and chemicals, and there are environmental risks to soil and freshwater from the herbicides.

The widespread nature of *Phragmites karka*, combined with the high cost and environmental considerations of control, makes regional management challenging.

Top: *Phragmites karka* at the Whangaehu estuary
Bottom: *Phragmites karka* at Campion

Land-use change

We hear a lot from the community about land-use change to forestry, particularly carbon forestry.

Plantation forests can provide habitat for some native species, such as bat, kiwi, and snails, and in some cases offer better habitat than pasture. Some forestry companies also undertake pest management as part of their operations, but this varies between operators. Large-scale forestry can also create conditions that favour pest animals, like deer, goats, and pigs, and pest plants such as banana passionfruit, old man's beard, and wilding conifers.

Forestry can make pest management more difficult. Access for Horizons officers and contractors is often restricted, lack of grazing no longer suppresses pest plants, and pine trees are sensitive to herbicides, which can limit control options for species that need spraying. These factors can allow pests to spread both within forestry blocks and onto neighbouring land. We also hear concerns that carbon forestry, if not actively maintained, may carry higher fire risk than production forestry, where regular thinning, pruning, and spacing are standard practice.

The Biosecurity Act allows RPMPs to make rules for a range of purposes, including to manage activities contributing to pest spread, and in some cases to levy certain land uses. These tools can impose costs on occupiers and require monitoring and compliance, which adds to implementation costs. The RPMP can be appealed by submitters, and appeals are most often made by those who would be affected by the rules, so any approach needs to carefully balance effectiveness, fairness, and costs.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Have your say at:
haveyoursay.horizons.govt.nz

HAVE YOUR SAY

Question 17

Please help us to set priorities for Horizons' pest management work. Where resources are limited, which types of species should receive the most attention? (Select one)

- Species affecting economic values (e.g. production, crops, livestock)
- Species affecting biodiversity values
- Species affecting recreational, social, or cultural values
- Other (please specify)

Question 18

Some of these issues are local, others are region-wide. Which approach do you prefer? Any Horizons involvement would need to be funded through rates. (Select one)

- Horizons leads most pest management work across the region
- Horizons supports local communities to manage the pests in their areas
- Other (please specify)

Question 19

For nuisance species (including plants and animals) that are widespread but not yet under RPMP rules, rank these approaches for pest management.

- Horizons undertakes direct control where occupiers provide access, funded by ratepayers
- Horizons provides guidance and tools to landowners
- Landowners manage pests themselves
- Community groups take the lead with support from Horizons
- Other (please specify)

He aha rā te whakaaro ki te kore tētahi momo takinga e whakauru ki te mahere?

What happens when a species can't be included in the Plan?

Biosecurity in the Horizons Region is broader than the RPMP. The RPMP is an important regulatory tool, but not every biosecurity risk is best addressed through plan rules and formal inclusion in the RPMP takes time.

Horizons supports other approaches, such as using and developing biocontrol, community monitoring, partnerships and grants to strengthen regional biosecurity outcomes.

A species doesn't need to be in the RPMP for Horizons to play a role.

Supporting action on the ground complements the plan and strengthens the wider biosecurity system. Alongside the RPMP, we are developing a regional **biosecurity strategic approach**. This will help prioritise emerging issues and guide action for responding to species that can't be included in the formal plan.

The examples below show how community-led efforts, supported by Horizons, contribute to effective biosecurity outcomes across the region.

Contorta pine. RPMP progressive containment mapped species.

Californian thistle

Californian thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) is not included in the RPMP, but it remains a persistent weed for farmers across the region.

To support farmers facing these pressures, Horizons has been working with the community for more than a decade to establish a biological control agent: the green thistle beetle (*Cassida rubiginosa*).

Although the adults make small feeding holes, the real impact comes from the larvae, which can heavily defoliate plants. With no native thistles in New Zealand, this biocontrol agent provides a targeted, low-risk option for reducing infestations over time.

The beetle is now widespread, often establishing on farms before landowners notice it. It is important that landowners do not spray the thistle before the beetle has had the opportunity to establish.

This approach allows a targeted, low-risk, and affordable way to manage a challenging species. It shows how collaboration between councils, researchers, and landowners can deliver practical results, even for species outside the RPMP.

Top: Green thistle beetle on Californian thistle
Middle: Tutsan beetle at day of introduction from Dave Alker. Tutsan is a RPMP progressive containment non-mapped species.
Bottom: Field horsetail weevil biocontrol. Field horsetail is a RPMP non-mapped species.

Tradescantia

Tradescantia (*Tradescantia fluminensis*) is another nuisance plant that is not included in the current RPMP. It forms dense mats that smother native seedlings and slow forest regeneration.

Horizons is using three biocontrol agents (two beetles and a leaf-spot fungus) to target the plant.

The beetles feed on tradescantia leaves and stems, while the fungus attacks leaves in wetter or colder areas where beetles struggle. These agents are establishing well and gradually reducing tradescantia densities over time.

This demonstrates how biocontrol provides a practical, long-term solution for managing widespread species, even those not in the RPMP.

Inset top: Tradescantia leaf beetle
Inset bottom: Tradescantia leaf-spot fungus
Bottom: Chilean needle grass. RPMP exclusion species.

Fringed water lily

Strong community partnerships are essential to effective biosecurity. Across the region, Catchment Care Groups help monitor local waterways and often spot issues early.

In 2024, the Mangaone River Catchment Care Group's routine eDNA sampling detected fringed water lily (*Nymphoides peltata*) near Eketahuna in the Tararua District. Subsequent surveillance found three sites.

Fringed water lily is a nuisance freshwater species that can choke waterways, displace native species, and has caused major problems overseas, including blocking hydro dams in the United States. Until this discovery, the plant was thought to have been eradicated from Aotearoa since the early 1990's, making these the only known sites in the country.

Landowners, Horizons, the Catchment Care Group, and leading aquatic pest specialist Dr Paul Champion worked together to eliminate the plant before it could spread.

Fringed water lily in the Tararua District

The success of this work shows how empowered communities, supported with practical tools such as eDNA kits, can be at the forefront of identifying and managing national-level biosecurity risks.

Kanorau Koiora Taketake—Indigenous Biodiversity Community Grant

Horizons' Kanorau Koiora Taketake – Indigenous Biodiversity Community Grant helps communities to take practical action to restore and protect the natural environment.

Between 2021-2025, 105 projects have been completed. In 2025, 22 of these related to pest animal or pest plant control.

Recent projects show how wide-ranging and impactful this work can be. In Horowhenua, the Ngāwakahiamoe Bush Trust strengthened its predator control network, with volunteers reporting louder and more diverse birdsong as possum, rat, and mustelid numbers decreased.

Near Ruapehu, the Otiranui Guardians expanded trapping across 155 hectares to better protect habitat for species such as bats and kiwi.

In the Rangitīkei, the Ohaumoko Family Trust cleared over 300m² of mature old man's beard plants from established native growth.

Controlled old man's beard that was smothering a Kahikatea tree in Wairere Stream Reserve

These projects highlight how community-led management of pest plants and animals goes hand in hand with habitat restoration.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Question 20

Do you have suggestions for how Horizons could work with iwi, hapū, community groups, or industry to manage species not included in the RPMP?

Question 21

Please indicate how involved Horizons should be in managing species (including plants and animals) that are not listed in the RPMP, noting that any involvement would be rates funded. (Select one)

- Horizons should take full responsibility for managing these species, where occupiers provide access
- Horizons should actively support and coordinate with others managing these species
- Horizons should provide occasional guidance and advice only
- Horizons should not be involved

Please explain your answer.

Question 22

Do you have a pest management experience, positive or negative, that you would like to share with us?

Have your say at:
haveyoursay.horizons.govt.nz

Top: Darwins barberry. RPMP progressive containment mapped species
Bottom: Moth plant flowers. RPMP progressive containment mapped species.

Te ao ture, e panoni haere ana!
A changing legislative landscape

Changes to the Biosecurity Act 1993

The government is proposing changes to the Biosecurity Act that could affect how we manage pests in our region. The process for approving and updating plans may become simpler and faster, making it easier to respond to new infestations, emerging species, or new control methods.

These changes are expected to be introduced or progress through Parliament in 2026, potentially taking effect in 2027 or soon after. Horizons is working alongside the Ministry for Primary Industries, where possible, to understand what the changes could mean for our region.

The Government has stated that uncertainty about timing or details is not a reason to delay current RPMP reviews. Until any new legislative changes come into effect, the current NPD (2015) and the Biosecurity Act 1993 continue to apply.

Local government reform and rates capping

The government is proposing changes to the local government system, including potential approaches to local government reform and reorganisation. While no decisions have been made, we know that the services regional councils provide will continue to be delivered in the short-term and will still be required into the future.

The government has also proposed a rates cap. Again, no decisions have yet been made. If this is proposal is progressed, councils will not be able to increase rates beyond the upper end, unless they have permission. If the community sought an increase in the level of service under the next RPMP, this may be difficult to fund.

This discussion document completes phase 2 of our review timeline:

Jan 2024 - Nov 2024	Nov 2024 - mid 2026	Mid 2026 - Sept 2027	Oct 2027 onwards
Project planning	Pre-engagement with iwi and key partner stakeholders	Analysis of discussion document feedback	Submissions and hearing on proposal
Evaluation of current RPMP	Issues and options development	Development of RPMP proposal	Council decision making and legal process
		Formal engagement	

Kia ahatia i muri iho i te tuhinga matapaki?
What happens after the discussion document?

The next step in our review is to look closely at all the feedback we have received and use it to develop a formal proposal for the Regional Pest Management Plan.

Under the Biosecurity Act, Council must adopt this proposal from 26 September 2027.

When we are developing the formal proposal, we will be considering the issues and options you have told us about in your feedback. We'll be looking at things like effects on values, options for control, funding options, and undertaking cost benefit analysis.

Anything that can't go into the RPMP, we'll look to prioritise and address through our **biosecurity strategic approach**.

We already know that there are some aspects of the plan that need tweaking. This includes some mapped areas now that we have more information on spread, refining the management programmes and adding images so that the plan is easy to use, making sure the definitions are fit for purpose, and ensuring that all species are mentioned within each common name (e.g. all five species of wallaby should be included).

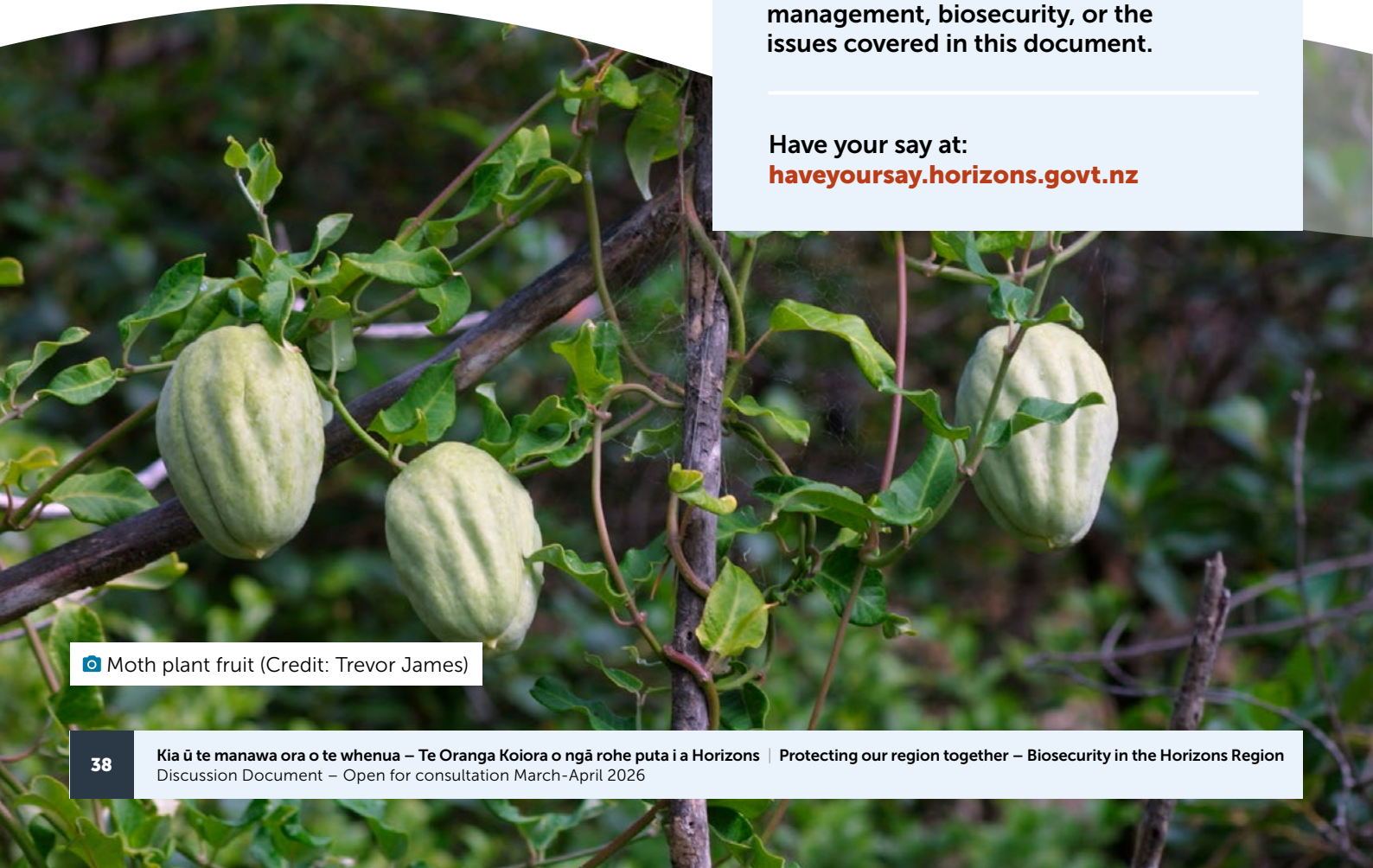
We will prepare a summary of the feedback received during this consultation and make it available on our website. You will have another chance to help shape the Regional Pest Management Plan once Council agrees to publicly notify the proposal, which is expected to happen in late 2027.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Question 23

Please tell us anything else you would like us to know about pest management, biosecurity, or the issues covered in this document.

Have your say at:
haveyoursay.horizons.govt.nz



Moth plant fruit (Credit: Trevor James)

Te rārangi kupu me ngā whakarāpopototanga
Glossary and abbreviations

Glossary

Clear land rule	A rule in the Regional Pest Management Plan with the intent to keep land clean of a pest.
Eradication	Reduce the infestation level of the subject to zero levels in an area in the short to medium term.
Exclusion	Prevent the establishment of the subject to zero levels in an area in the short to medium term.
Good neighbour rule	A rule in the Regional Pest Management Plan with the intent to manage boundary issues.
Occupier	a) in relation to any place physically occupied by any person, means that person; and b) in relation to any other place, means the owner of the place; and c) in relation to any place, includes any agent, employee, or other person, acting or apparently acting in the general management or control of the place.
Progressive containment	Contain or reduce the geographic distribution of the subject to an area over time.
Proposal document	A document that must be produced under the Biosecurity Act 1993 as part of the plan making process for a Regional Pest Management Plan.
Protecting values at place	The subject that is capable of causing damage to a place is excluded or eradicated from that place, or is contained, reduced, or controlled within the place to an extent that protects the values of that place.
Site-led	The subject that is capable of causing damage to a place is excluded or eradicated from that place, or is contained, reduced, or controlled within the place to an extent that protects the values of that place.
Sustained control	Provide for ongoing control of the subject to reduce its impacts and its spread to other properties.
Wilding conifer	In relation to this document, refers to Contorta pine, dwarf mountain pine, mountain pine, and Scots pine.

Abbreviations

DOC	Department of Conservation
MPI	Ministry for Primary Industries
NPD	National Policy Direction for Pest Management 2015
RPMP	Regional Pest Management Plan

HAVE YOUR SAY

Kia ū te manawa ora o te whenua – Te Oranga Koiora o ngā rohe puta i a Horizons | Protecting our region together – Biosecurity in the Horizons Region Discussion Document is open for consultation March-April 2026.

Have your say at:
haveyoursay.horizons.govt.nz

Te Āpiti Toms Lookout

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