



The Institute of Noxious Plants Officers Inc.

NEWSLETTER

Editor

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Richmond

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NEWSLETTER NO. 3

MEMBERS:

Recently an emergency committee of the Executive met to prepare an Institute submission to M.A.F. Qual. on the future of Noxious Plants Administration in New Zealand. The text of that submission appears later in this Newsletter.

It is safe to say that Government has a desire to integrate the pest and weed management organisations, perhaps the time is getting nearer when consideration should be given to having some form of dialogue with say, supervisors from the pest movement to ascertain their feelings regarding the need to amalgamate our respective organisations for the benefit of all concerned. In this period of uncertainty it is important that we as an institute maintain in public at least, an appearance of unity and keep our inevitable differences to the many forums provided for open and frank discussions. To assist members express their views I would like to commence a "Letters to the Editor" section in the next issue of the newsletter. The only stipulation would be that all letters must be signed.

On behalf of the President and Executive, I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

From the Secretary's Desk:

New Member: Lisabeth Geddes (Miss) Franklin County - Welcome

Resignations: Jeff Jeffery, Piako
Joy Davidson, Manukau

Conference Reminders:

1. Members should urge employers to arrange travel requirements and make payment before the end of this financial year to obtain maximum subsidy. May be accommodation can be pre-paid. (Check with Milton Kreft).
2. Remits, notices of motion and nominations for National Office must be in the hands of the Secretary no later than 1 March, 1988.

General Reminders:

There have been a number of new appointments made and the odd member who has resigned or retired. Please inform your Executive Member so the Secretary can be informed.

From the Presidential Palace:

Aquatic Plant Monitoring

Aquatic Plant Monitoring and control are acknowledged to ideally require people trained in under water survey operations. Should Noxious Plants Council move to establish a requirement for under water surveys to be undertaken the N.P.C. Training Committee will co-ordinate any special training required. The training committee has requested the Institute to ascertain the number of Noxious Plants Officers who are either trained or interested divers.

If you are such a person could you please write to the National Secretary giving any relevant details as soon as possible.

BRANCH NEWS:

SOUTH AUCKLAND 10 October, 1987 28 present.

General Business:

1. Two new members to present a paper at each Branch meeting, relating to Noxious Plant Control.
2. Congratulations to Gary Arnold on obtaining his Certificate of Proficiency.
3. Discussion was generated over the hire price of field days display. Decided that the charge was to remain at \$250 to non-contributing authorities.
4. The need for officers to maintain a high profile within the community.
5. Five speakers presented papers to the members present.

NORTHLAND BRANCH 13 October, 1987 13 present.

General Business:

1. 1990 Conference. Branch is to proceed lightly with planning for conference but to keep their options open.
2. Lively discussion took place on the revised M.A.F. paper with a small sub-committee being formed.
3. 1989 Conference - Branch requested to present a paper at the Conference.

4. Retirement of Eddie Bolton (Rodney County). The branch thanked Eddie for all he had contributed to the Institute over the past 11 years and wished him a long and pleasant retirement.
5. Next meeting - Whangarei, February, 1988.

MANAWATU-WEST COAST BRANCH 22 October, 1987 12 present

General Business:

1. Some concern was expressed regarding the credibility of the Monsanto Video. The branch Secretary was to contact Monsanto.
2. Branch Seminar: It was agreed that the seminar was very successful and these training seminars should be held every year. (Well done!)
3. Next meeting, 19 February, 1988.

INSTITUTE JERSEYS

An order will be dispatched early in January. If you require one please return an order stating size and enclosing a cheque for \$50 to Eric Eden (before 10 January, 1988).

ARE WEEDS TAKING OVER?

by Vaughan Jones

The number and variety of weeds seen around the country seem to be increasing, and this despite the wide range of control methods available.

It is heart-breaking to see a beautiful clean farm bordered by one covered in thistles, ragwort, gorse, you name it.

The real eye-open to me was a trip on the main trunk line from Hamilton to Palmerston North which gives one an elevated view of the backs of many farms. Inspectors of noxious weeds should try it sometime, but with their tranquillisers.

One thing which stood out was that bigger paddocks and bigger farms were much weedier than small ones.

Of all the countries I have seen, Australia, the U.S.A. and Canada are the weediest so the same size scenario seems to apply.

In these countries many farms are completely covered in barley grass and in Canada whole counties are as yellow with ragwort as New Zealand is green with grass.

In Idaho, U.S.A., rush skeleton weed was first noticed on 2ha in 1960 and was ignored. It spread incredibly rapidly and now covers millions of hectares across the state. Total eradication is now out of the question.

The same has happened here with mayweed. The first I saw was just north of Taumarunui about 25 years ago; now it is dotted everywhere. It spreads along roadsides and gets into gateways and gradually creeps into paddocks.

Five finger grass is doing the same. Kikuyu (certainly not always a weed) has spread along coastal roadsides nearly to the bottom of the North Island, but heavy stocking seems to stop it spreading more than a metre or two into roadside paddocks.

Many weeds can be controlled or even eliminated by grazing management so this course should be a number one consideration, especially when the improved management can be used as a pasture improver and profit earner at the same time.

The use of parasites to control weeds sounds attractive, but the ragwort caterpillar does not seem to have made much difference.

The army worm beetle has appeared to keep army worm numbers down, but this year in our area the battle was lost in maize.

However, an interesting observation was that, where maize was healthy and growing well, caterpillar damage was of no

consequence, but where maize was suffering fertility and drought effects the damage was so great as to leave nothing for the farmer.

Is this nature's way?

There seems to be a cyclic pattern in that the parasite and the host seem to share periods of dominance.

St. Johnswort, a weed similar to ragwort, covered millions of hectares in Washington state and was almost wiped out by the Chrysolina beetle in the 1960s but it is increasing again.

In California it was the first major biological weed control success when in 10 years it changed a million hectares of unusable weed-covered rangeland into an area where St. Johnswort was only seen occasionally on roadsides.

Back home, we now have Chilean needle grass threatening low fertility, drought-prone areas.

Common weeds (accepted by some), like Californian thistle and winged thistle, are certainly spreading at the expense of pasture growth.

Noxious weeds are almost always exotics which means that they came in and started somewhere in the country. It is up to us all to keep our eyes open and where necessary take action to try to prevent recurrences.

All farmers and land owners (including the various Government departments) should appreciate that they are only tenants of the land during their lifetime or occupancy, and should try to leave it in better condition than when they took it over.

If a weed has become a problem, and today's farming economy prohibits the cost of eradication, then it should be discussed with your local body.

The weed should not be ignored - unless you want to have your name attached to it like in Australia where Patersons Curse has spread over great areas.

10 November, 1987

Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries,
Private Bag,
WELLINGTON

ATTENTION: M.A.F. Qual - C.A. Ward

Dear Madam,

NOXIOUS PLANTS ADMINISTRATION:

I refer to your letter (Ref. 12/10/42) of the 8 October, 1987.

Following is the Institute's submission on the M.A.F.'s review of noxious plants administration.

The submission has been divided into two sections. The first deals with comments generally on the paper, the second dealing with it as requested in your letter.

SECTION ONE

1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 The suggestion is made in the paper that administrative authorities are in general dissatisfied with the Noxious Plants Act 1978. Quite simply that is just not true. We would respectively suggest that any dissatisfaction has been directed against Noxious Plants Council policies and the programmes developed for individual weeds. The legislation itself, like any other legislation, will always be interpreted in different ways.

1.2(iv) The present legislation would be adequate if the previous recommendation is changed.

2. Introduction

2.1 We are concerned that it is suggested in this section (and indeed throughout the entire paper), that

individuals will be left to make the decision as to whether they will carry out weed control or not. If left to the individual, weed control will not be carried out.

- 2.2(ii) The paper alludes 'to define the optimum administrative structure for noxious weed control in New Zealand'. Why is it that only one structure be offered for discussion? Furthermore, why should it be taken for granted that Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is the right organisation to administer latent weed control?

3. Past and Present Concepts of Noxious Plants

- 3.4(iii) For the paper to state than 'an anomaly has arisen in that a plant can be declared both "target" and "widespread" in the same district based on the intent of the local authority' is in itself an anomaly.

There are perfectly good reasons for it being that way, reasons that are only too obvious given the degrees of infestations throughout any authority's area. Such an elementary mistake calls into question the ability of the writer to present a balanced point of view. Does the writer understand what they are saying?

5. Importance of Weeds in New Zealand

- 5.3 We disagree with the statement that "Neighbour protection is a nebulous concept". The statement is in itself nebulous.

How can a sensible farmer take action to protect himself if there is no legislative requirements for protection. Programming under present legislation does protect the occupier.

Throughout a District Programme the over-riding theme is one of neighbour protection. There has got to be a legislated neighbour protection. This will give some guarantee to an occupier with clear land from continual reinfestation from an adjoining property with a bad noxious plant problem. We believe that it is essential to have community input into a District Programme and thereby foster a community spirit into weed control.

This concept is a strongly held view by all of our District Noxious Plants Authorities.

From these deliberations the Institute concludes that future legislation must not only encompass "Latent

Plants" but must include provisions for the control of "widespread" plants also, to impede the spread of the latter across the boundaries of local/regional authorities; this is deemed essential.

5.6

The inference is made within the second paragraph that Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries' staff have been to the fore in doing the work to prevent Class A noxious plants becoming established and spreading in New Zealand. Recognition is accorded to Noxious Plants Officers for their help. While Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries may have caused the work to be done we believe that without the Noxious Plants Officers the situation could be entirely different today to what it is. Not enough credit is accorded to the Noxious Plants Officers. Section 44 of the Noxious Plants Act gives the responsibility of eradicating Class A noxious plants to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. In numerous instances throughout the country Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries have simply neglected their responsibilities and the District Authority has carried out the work at their own initiative knowing full well that to leave it to untrained Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries' personnel would be asking for trouble. It has been legislated for the Crown to act if a District Authority defaults, but nowhere is it legislated for the reverse to happen. More is the pity. However, Territorial Local Government knows its responsibilities to its ratepayers and accordingly the work was done with no questions asked.

Refer to Appendix.

6.

Economic Rationale

6.1.1

End of second paragraph is a stupid statement. Export dollars are to the benefit of the Country which are then spread through internal spending.

6.1.3

First Paragraph: Some plants are of national importance for example Contorta and Clematis Vitalba both are high priority environmental invaders.

Second Paragraph: states should the occupier decide to take no action on weeds, this will have little effect beyond the property because those weeds are already present elsewhere in the district or region. If this was allowed it would be disastrous in both the short and long term.

6.2

It is important to realise that the local environment is effected by noxious plants and land protection is the criteria which must be implemented.

The Minister in 1985 in his foreword to "A guide to the identification of New Zealand Common Weeds" stated as follows: "The economic importance of weeds to our agricultural and horticultural industries is unquestioned, one recent study suggests a production loss of some \$340 million a year unquote".

It should be realised that a policy of keeping land clear of noxious plants for future generations should be the prime aim of government and all present participating bodies.

Page 17, third paragraph refers.

We wish to ask what happens when a latent noxious plant is found to be in actual fact widespread? We respectfully suggest that the statement made in the third paragraph absolutely guarantees that when they are latent plants Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries must consider they may become widespread and no longer latent and therefore it is important in the first instance to not only consider latent plants but to also consider the whole gambit of those plants that are causing significant future economic losses and/or environmental deterioration. What is the point in considering plants that have the potential to cause those things if you do not consider what will happen if they do in fact cause those things? When does it become neither practicable nor cost effective?

7. Proposed Strategy

7.1.2 First paragraph: there is a justification for enforcement for the programming of 'widespread' weed control. Funding is a non event as subsidy was withdrawn in 1985. Costs are on the occupier.

Second paragraph last sentence: Legislation by District Programming requirements has controlled and prevented in many cases further establishment of weeds.

7.2.2 The Institute considers that future administrations considering legislation encompassing this priority concept of noxious plants control, should ensure that the eradication/control functions of all "Latent Noxious Plants" known to be present in New Zealand be administered or enforced at Local Authority level. These authorities can capitalise on the knowledge, experience and dedicated professional approach of their Noxious Plants Officers who are accepted and held in high esteem within the communities that they serve.

7.2.3 The word "could" should be replaced with "shall" and the words "if they so wish" be deleted. By doing this it would ensure that local administration would be effective.

8. Implementing Proposed Strategy

8.1.1 i) There is no provision for local government to make representations or submissions on possible latent plants. There are at present 148 Noxious Plants Officers at local authority level who carry out surveillance work.

ii) We agree at field operational level the 148 Noxious Plants Officers have the required skills in botanical identification and plant control in the field and public relations due to the prerequisite of the qualifications to gain the Certificate of Proficiency which is a mandatory requirement.

8.1.2 First paragraph the words "and be optional" be deleted.

The requirements of the system would include the following:

iii) This contradicts. Optional local administration would weaken the argument.

v) The status quo ensures that there are 148 competently trained Noxious Plants operational staff.

The next sentence the words "choose to" be deleted.

- Policy no comment except that the words under national guidelines should be included after regional programmes.

- Servicing Training is at present in place with C.O.P. Training for Noxious Plants Officers.

- Field Operations No comment except to say that this does happen under the status quo.

8.2.1 This Institute agrees that the present administration is a large improvement upon that existing before 1978.

The most significant improvements have occurred in the last two years. They are a consequence of the national direction provided by the N.P.C. through its

policy for declaring and categorising noxious plants (as described in Section 3.4) and through the related performance and procedural guidelines.

In addition the one hundred and forty predominantly full time N.P.O.'s employed by Local Authorities countrywide are able to deal with emergency noxious plant outbreaks or campaigns and have demonstrated a rapid response time when dealing with new finds of harmful plants.

8.2.(11) For the paper to question the honesty of our employers is not only a slight on local authorities but an even bigger one on the writer. The Institute feels that a Statutory Declaration signed by in most cases a senior member of a local authority, and countersigned by a J.P. gives an almost certain guarantee that subsidy claimed for was committed to noxious plants duties.

8.2.2(iii) Criticism not valid, for example in Horowhenua which is used as a case in point, African feathergrass has been reduced by that Authority from a dense stand to a minor infestation which is at present under control.

8.2.3 The third paragraph refers again that local authorities have misused funds or would do so in the future. We strongly object to this view being offered in the paper as it calls into question the integrity of those involved in noxious plants administration and control.

8.3.1 National M.A.F. do not have the resources for the control of Class A Plants and the work in the main is carried out by Noxious Plants Officers at local level. Wellington DNPA as an example.

Policy - There is no provision for Local Authority input. Our Institute members are employed by Local Authorities and are firmly of the opinion that Local Government should play a role in National policy making.

8.3.2 We reject that District Authorities should be allowed to employ a Noxious Plants Officer if they so wish. This is contrary to present legislation and believe any change to the status quo will undermine the effectiveness of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries own proposal. Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries already have the power to act in default of Noxious Plants Authority not performing its duties (Section 32 N.P. Act 1978).

SECTION TWO

1.A General

1. The Institute found great difficulty in finding fault with the broad concept of the paper. Objections were raised to many sections but in general the paper is well prepared.

The Institute considers that the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries proposal could very well destroy the foundations of noxious plants control throughout New Zealand, foundations that have taken most of this century to build. We view Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries expanded involvement with some reservation. The Institute feels that the proposal as submitted puts into jeopardy the future employment of Noxious Plants Officers throughout the country.

The Institute is opposed to the concept of Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries taking over the responsibility of latent noxious plants control. We believe that Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries had a vested interest but with 40% of the plants on the latent list being plants of non-agricultural significance why should Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries have total control?

2. We agree that the control of latent noxious plants must be the first priority of a noxious weed control system to protect the future of our country's varied environments. We therefore offer the following recommendations.

That if the latent plants control system is to be administered by Central Government then let it be run by an inter-departmental committee for example consisting of Local Government, M.A.F., D.O.C., Maori Affairs, Forestry, M.O.W. D.S.I.R. and Internal Affairs. The Chairman of the Committee would be elected by that Committee. What must be considered is that what is good for Ministry of Agricultural and Fisheries is not necessarily good for New Zealand as a whole. There are a wide range of environments that need to be represented and an inter-departmental committee would achieve that. We do not believe the responsibility should lie primarily with Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and indeed should encompass other interested organisations.

3. We respectfully suggest that if plant control is left to individuals to determine whether they will do it or not, it may not be done.

Legislation would be required to ensure that control of noxious plants will be carried out by the individual or carried out by Local Government by default.

The field operations part of the proposal should be the responsibility of the current District Authorities and their officers. In referring to 8.1.3 of the discussion paper we believe that this proves our point of being capable to perform the tasks required to operate an effective control system. The District Authorities have systems in place that will facilitate early detection and reporting of latent noxious plants. There is a network of highly trained Noxious Plants Officers already doing the work. We see an essential need for minimum requirements with respect to widespread noxious plants.

4. It is of vital importance that District Programmes be maintained and supported by legislation. We recognise the need for a high standard of records and public awareness and as an Institute we have encouraged this for some time.

5. We would propose that any person working at field operational level have a minimum qualification of Certificate of Proficiency.

6. We do not believe that the Noxious Plants Act 1978 should be revoked. We do however agree that slight changes must be made.

We also agree that Territorial Local Government is the best organisation to administer that and that it should be legislated for accordingly.

We reject the suggestion that District Authorities should be allowed to employ a Noxious Plants Officer if they so wish. This is contrary to present legislation and believe any change to the status quo will undermine the effectiveness of Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries own proposal.

Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries already have the power to act in default of a District Noxious Plants Authority not performing its duties (Section 32 N.P. Act 1978).

- 1.B Where do you believe future directions in weed control should lie?

- i) Noxious plants control should remain the responsibility of territorial local authorities. That includes latent noxious plants. We believe this for the following reasons:
 - a) an effective administration is already in place.
 - b) a local authority is accountable to its own ratepayers, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries are not.
 - c) many latent plants do not have a rural significance.
- ii) The current legislation needs amending to accommodate changes made since its introduction but we do not favour a major restructuring and shifting of emphasis away from local government responsibility.
- iii) The cost of implementing a latent noxious plant system through (i) above should be met by Central Government through Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. This would include research.
- iv) Time spent by Noxious Plants Officers on surveillance work for latent plants would need to be met by the Government Department who administers the national programme.

2.A

Are the national and local/regional systems integratable?

- i) We believe that the systems are not only integratable but compatible with each other providing that the present network remains in place. The success of latent weed control, and for that matter, noxious plants control in general, is dependent on local authorities and Noxious Plants Officers carrying on as they are now.
- ii) The paper in the main concentrates on the "top end" of the administration system. It is our view that the "bottom end" is equally as important as the "top end" and that neither will be effective without each other. We believe the present structure has proven itself to be integratable and question the need for change.

2.B

What should be the role of your organisation?

- i) We see the Institute of Noxious Plants Officers Inc. remaining in existence and fulfilling its objects, being:
 - a) To promote and maintain a high level of efficiency and standard of service to members.
 - b) To promote the general welfare of and to take any steps that from time to time be deemed desirable in the interest of members.
 - c) To promote facilities of an educational nature, and exchange ideas among members in order to provide a uniformity of approach to Noxious Plants problems.
 - d) To assist the Noxious Plants Council and the District Noxious Plants authorities in the securing of any necessary legislative amendments to the Noxious Plants Act 1978.
 - e) To hold conference seminars for members and meetings of branches and the presentation of papers or lectures where all matters relating to Noxious Plants can be considered by members.
 - f) To foster or promote legislation with regard to facilitating members attending meetings in connection with the Institute and branches which shall include those members employed by Nassella Tussock Boards.
- ii) We also believe that our Institute has over the years developed a very high standard of training that is envied by many other local government groups. We are very proud of our achievements in this important area and wish for the same training opportunities to continue. We also believe that funding for training should be continued by Central Government whether it be Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries or whatever.

In forwarding this submission the Institute hopes that many of the matters raised and commented in the discussion paper are given due consideration by the Committee.

INSTITUTE OF NOXIOUS PLANTS OFFICERS

The following figures have been compiled from the 45 returns to a recent Institute survey of DNPA's on Class A and Latent Plants.

CLASS A PLANTS

<u>KNOWN SITES</u>	<u>ACTIVE SITES</u>	<u>WHO CLEARS</u>			<u>WHO LOCATED</u>		
		<u>NPO</u>	<u>MAF</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>MPO</u>	<u>MAF</u>	<u>OTHER</u>
383	365	311	26	28	255	37	91
		85%	7.1%	7.6%	66.5%	9.6%	23.7%

LATENT PLANTS

<u>KNOWN SITES</u>	<u>ACTIVE SITES</u>	<u>WHO CLEARS</u>			<u>WHO LOCATED</u>		
		<u>NPO</u>	<u>MAF</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>MPO</u>	<u>MAF</u>	<u>OTHER</u>
613	589	286	3	300	459	38	116
		48.5%	0.5%	50.9%	74.8%	6.1%	18.9%