

TAUPO DISTRICT COUNCIL MANAGEMENT OF PLANT PESTS, UNWANTED FUNGI, and UNWANTED INSECTS AS THEY PERTAIN TO VEGETATION ON COUNCIL-OWNED PROPERTY POLICY- ADOPTED MAY 2009

The Policy

The Taupo District Council Management of Plant Pests, Unwanted Fungi, and Unwanted Insects as they pertain to Vegetation on Council-owned Property was adopted by Council on 20 May 2009 and will be implemented Council-wide. The policy comes into effect as of 20 May 2009.

Policy Statement

Taupo District Council will control the use of chemical sprays in the management of plant pests, unwanted fungi, and unwanted insects as they pertain to vegetation on Council-owned property, in an environmentally, socially and economically viable manner whilst meeting its legal and statutory¹ responsibilities.

Control methods as they pertain to vegetation will continue to be decided upon in terms of the complexity of the plant pest, unwanted fungi or unwanted insect being controlled; practicality; location; and effectiveness in relation to the particular problem being addressed.

The Taupo District Council reserves the right, through the Council resolution process, to identify areas under the Council's jurisdiction that are to be "No-Spray" geographical areas.

Background

Under a number of legislative documents², the Taupo District Council is obliged to undertake plant pest, fungi and insect control on Council-owned property to varying degrees throughout the District.

The intention of this policy is to ensure that the Council meets its legal and community obligations for such management on land it administers, whilst doing so in a manner that is environmentally, socially and economically viable.

To date Council has reduced its use of chemicals by an average of approximately 30% per year since 2006. Council also communicates such activity to the residents on the chemically-sensitive residents' register³.

Council's Biosecurity responsibilities vary across the District. For example, in some cases blackberry bush is not considered to be a plant pest when it is maintained within gullies as a means to reduce the risk of erosion.

¹ LGA 2002 Part 2 s14 1(h); Reserves Act 1977; Biosecurity Act 1993 sections 6 and 76 (1)(i); Conservation Act 1987; RMA 1991; Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 (HSNO); Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992; Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Act 2001; Pesticides Act 1979; Health Act 1956; Agricultural Chemical Trespass Bill;

² Et al.

³ The chemically-sensitive residents' register is a list of people who have advised council that they have a chemical intolerance related to spraying. Taupo District Council Customer Services endeavour to contact all people on the list on the day of spraying activity to advise of the area to be sprayed and the chemical to be used before 8.30am

The management of plant pests, unwanted fungi and unwanted insects may require the use of herbicides, fungicides and insecticides depending on the location. The following locations require different treatments:

- Reserves or sports fields
- Amenity footpaths, edges, or tree grates
- Gardens (including annual beds and rose gardens)
- Land disposal sites such as at Rakaunui Road in Taupo
- Forests such as the Turangi Water Supply Reserve and Omori Wastewater Forest area
- Lakeshore reserves
- Lakeshore and water channels
- Camping grounds (such as Motutere, Motuoapa, Turangi Holiday Park)
- Urban roads - in the kerbing channel
- Rural roads - around signs and posts
- Road reserves - Environment Waikato requirement that Council control plant pests on Road reserves (typically blackberry and/or brush weed)
- Bridges and large diameter culverts (2m² plus)
- Drainage channels/stormwater gullies

Like the Taupo District Council, all local authorities are involved in managing plant pests, fungi and insects on Council-owned property and have recently faced public concerns around the impact of the chemicals used to control these on the environment, staff and the community.

As a result, several local authorities throughout the country have developed and implemented weed and vegetation control policies or strategies in an effort to reduce the use of chemical sprays. For the most part, other local authorities have opted to reduce the use of chemical sprays wherever viable but have continued to accept that, in many cases, other alternatives are not currently practical.

Local authorities are not alone in their obligations to control plant pests, unwanted fungi and unwanted insects. Other organisations such as the Department of Conservation, regional councils, roading authorities and the New Zealand Transport Agency also use chemical methods. In addition, private enterprise such as forestry, forestry to dairy conversions, golf courses, farmers and some retailers also utilise chemical control methods as part of their business activity.

Objectives

The objective of the policy is to ensure that the Taupo District Council gives preference to non-chemical methods of plant pest, unwanted fungi and unwanted insect management with chemicals only being used where there are no viable alternatives. To achieve this objective, the Taupo District Council will use chemicals only when:

- plant pest, unwanted fungi and unwanted insect control is necessary to achieve the desired level of service for an asset or to meet Council's obligations, and non-chemical control is not viable or effective
- use is consistent with the nature of the asset and the service it provides
- the methods employed lead to the most accurate possible targeting
- the desired result can be achieved with a minimal number of applications

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- the use and desired outcomes are consistent with and comply with other policies (ie District Plan, EW's Regional Pest Management Strategy etc)
- it can do so in a socially responsible manner

However, where chemicals are the most viable method of control, the Taupo District Council will reduce the potential for public exposure through:

- selection of the lowest impact application methods
- quantity of chemical use being kept to the minimum amount necessary to achieve reasonable level of control
- application timed to be of the least inconvenience for the public but most effective in terms of outcome
- advance communication of application when possible
- use of signage on site
- active maintenance and use of a chemically-sensitive residents' register to communicate spraying activity
- encouragement of chemically-sensitive residents to call in to Council for updates on spray activities
- continued adherence to The Code of Practice, as outlined in NZS 8409:2004 or succeeding documents.
- requirement for all staff and contractors involved in the management and application of chemicals to have the appropriate level of Growsafe qualification (with contracts signed to ensure this)
- consideration of this policy when implementing other Council strategies and policies such as
 - The Draft Lake Taupo Erosion and Flood Strategy (2009)
 - Annual Asset Management Plans (Levels of Service for Amenity Plantings; Cemeteries; Parks and Reserves; and Sports Grounds and Facilities)
 - The Tree and Vegetation Policy (2005)
 - Reserves Management Plans

To achieve ongoing minimization of chemical methods of control and management of plant pests, unwanted fungi and unwanted insects, alternatives to the use of chemicals and alternative planting methods will continue to be investigated, trialled and implemented. New methods proved to be more effective in meeting the criteria set out in this policy will be implemented.

Measurement and Review

The management of plant pests, unwanted fungi, and unwanted insects activity will be reported on annually.

This policy will be reviewed five years after the adoption date unless otherwise directed by Council.

GLOSSARY

Companion Planting – the planting of different crops in close physical proximity on the theory that this will reduce the incidence of plant pests, unwanted fungi and unwanted insects. Also often used as a method of integrated pest management to reduce insecticide use.

Fungicides – are chemical compounds or biological organisms used to kill or reduce the incidence of fungi or fungal spores which can cause serious damage to plant species

Herbicides – are used to kill unwanted plants. Selective herbicides kill specific targets while leaving the desired crop relatively unharmed.

Insecticides – are chemicals specifically used against insects that threaten the important natural value and/or biodiversity at a specific site of vegetation

Manual weeding – weeding activity that is done by hand

Plant Pests – those species of plants that pose the greatest threat to an areas' natural and historic resources and sustainability.

Unwanted Fungi those fungi or fungal spores which can cause serious damage to plant species

Unwanted Insects - insects that threaten the important natural value and/or biodiversity at a specific site of vegetation

Vegetation – all plant life that occurs in an area or a time period. The specific flora system of a specific region (eg 'forests', 'meadows')

Viable - capable of being done with the resources available within the time and budget available