

CHILEAN NEEDLE GRASS - PEST PLANT OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Growing Impact of Chilean Needle Grass on Recreation, Tourism and the Environment.

Chilean Needle Grass (CNG) has traditionally been viewed as an agricultural pest plant but recent findings reveal it has the potential to cause significant problems beyond agriculture.

The discovery of CNG on the Wither Hills farm park (a recreational area for Blenheim) and near Omaka Air Field where the popular Easter Air Show is held, highlights how this pest plant can have a negative impact on recreation, tourism and the environment. A warning that should not be ignored.

What does this discovery mean for Recreation and Tourism?

- It means that these areas could be closed to the public during the seeding season.
- Iconic Marlborough events such as the Wine and Food and the Omaka Air show could be adversely affected to avoid risk associated with people and vehicles spreading the plant.
- Other regions have questioned why the Farm Park was open during the seeding season.
- Animal welfare – the seed attaches itself to animal fur and will penetrate soft tissue i.e. dog skin causing significant distress to pets.
- Seed attaches itself to mud on footwear, cycles, vehicles, machinery and clothing. The seed is spread via these types of mechanisms.



What does the spread of CNG mean for Marlborough's environment?

- Marlborough is well known for threatened endemic plants. CNG has the potential to invade the landscape, in a similar manner to parts of Australia where it has had a negative impact on rare native plants.
- If allowed to spread it will reduce the viability of hill country farming.
- significant infestations of CNG could see a change in land use that could have a negative effect on the environment, water quality and sustainable land management.

Possible impacts of CNG seed;

- Loss of recreational areas and potential loss of tourism opportunities
- Loss of biodiversity
- Reduction of profit from tourism, vineyards and agriculture
- The cost of managing CNG once it's established.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Look out for the seed heads in spring and summer.

Report to Marlborough District Council Bio-security

Phone: 03 520 7400

Mobile: 027 644 8010

Wash-down vehicles and follow recommended hygiene protocols.

The Chilean Needle Group Action Group is working with the community to put in place voluntary protocols to stop the spread of Chilean Needle Grass. Together we can control this Pest Plant and reduce its grip on our region.

