

# Weeds taking over

WHILE visiting Goulburn last week, I was astounded when I saw how bad the serrated tussock problem is on the properties around Goulburn.

I work as a Senior Biosecurity Officer (Plants) for the Marlborough District Council in New Zealand.

I have been in the field of Biosecurity for 13 years.

We also have infestations of serrated tussock scattered across our region but all infestations are controlled annually to prevent them seeding.

Unless something changes in the Goulburn area, the serrated tussock infestation will continue to spread until pastoral farming becomes uneconomic.

This situation occurred in Marlborough in the late 1940s when a farmer walked off and the Government had no option but to take over the farm.

These days, landowners in our region have an obligation to control their serrated tussock.

The district council is responsible for ensuring that they comply with their obligation.

Landowners spend \$780,000 annually controlling serrated tussock in the Marlborough region alone.

After visiting Goulburn, I have no doubt that our money is well spent.

Another invasive weed, Chilean needlegrass is also beginning to spread through the Goulburn area.

Chilean Needlegrass has been in the Marlborough region since the early 1950s.

It is also in the Hawkes Bay in the North Island of New Zealand.

Despite a huge effort to contain this aggressive weed, we now have an estimated 3,500 hectares of this terrible weed in our region.

Every year, we find more isolated sites. They are a direct threat to economic pastoral farming.

Sheep are no longer an option on badly infested properties because of the damage caused to the pelts and meat by the aggressive seed heads.

If you don't attempt to contain Chilean Needlegrass in the Goulburn area soon, the long term economic impact will be catastrophic.

It would be a shame to see such beautiful country devoid of cattle and sheep and producing nothing economically for the benefit of Australia. Just an area covered in South American weeds.

**Ben Minehan,  
Senior Biosecurity Officer (Plants),  
Marlborough District Council,  
Blenheim, NZ.**