



Report **06.644**
Date 3 November 2006
File WB/02/15/01

Committee **Rural Services and Wairarapa**
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National Rabbit Calicivirus Biocide Programme

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee of the results of the national rabbit calicivirus biocide exercise undertaken by various regional councils in 2006.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

The biocide trials were carried out under the auspices of the RCV Users Protocol. This protocol was developed by a consortium of ten regional councils and two unitary authorities, termed the RCV Users Group. The group obtained approval and registration of the product to allow it to be imported from Australia. This process was completed in June 2005.

The RCV Users Group undertook to report the results of biocide trials carried out in June and July 2006 to determine the efficacy of RCV as a rabbit management tool. The report findings also provide a basis to assess the scope for use of the product in future.

In June and July 2006 nine regional councils carried out rabbit control operations using Rabbit Calicivirus Suspension (RCV) as a biocide delivered on carrot bait. The principal aim was to determine if RCV used as a biocide would provide an effective tool for controlling rabbit populations in peri-urban (lifestyle) areas where normal control methods (shooting and poisoning) were not possible.

4. Results

Biocide trials were carried out at a total of 117 sites. Trials were not carried out in Marlborough DC or Greater Wellington RC.

As expected, land use at trial sites was predominantly private ‘lifestyle’/rural residential properties followed by public parks and reserves with a small number of rural/farm situations.

None of the regions who conducted trials have provided any information about the costs of carrying out the trials. However many have noted that the exercises were time and labour intensive and involved significant costs. Some operators have commented that the amount of effort and costs expended do not appear to be commensurate with apparent reductions in rabbit populations shown in the trials.

This survey does not purport to be an objective or scientific assessment of the efficacy of RCV as a biocide for rabbit control purposes. This is precluded by the small number and sizes of data sets and the lack of consistency and control in data collection across the various regions.

However, in spite of this the subjective and essentially anecdotal information gathered from 117 sites indicates that RCV is at best only capable of achieving low to moderate reductions in rabbit populations at sites when used as a biocide under the RCV Users Protocol. There is anecdotal evidence that the costs and effort expended in the biocide operations are not commensurate with the apparent reductions in rabbit populations.

5. Conclusion

While RCV used as a biocide does not appear to be a particularly cost effective rabbit control tool it is still likely to be able to provide some benefits at certain sites where seemingly intractable rabbit nuisance problems exist.

The outcomes of this survey do not suggest that there is any need to significantly change the standards and procedures for the use of RCV as a biocide in the RCV Users Protocol. There is, however, still the same imperative to prevent the indiscriminate use of RCV. This, if it occurs, will reduce the effectiveness of rabbit calicivirus which is already present in the environment and is acting as a biocontrol.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***

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