



BIOSECURITY & REGULATORY NEWS

The biosecurity space is busy at the moment with several responses ongoing and likely to continue throughout the holiday period. Of particular interest to members are:

- Remain vigilant for black-grass. If present, any seed heads are likely to be standing above the crop canopy.
- Yellow-legged hornet. There are increasing numbers in Auckland.

The regulatory space also remains active with several consultations having just closed, and the recent approval by the government for drafting of regulations to support the nationwide rural recycling scheme covering small bags, woven polypropylene bags, agrichemicals and plastic farm waste. While work continues for the SGNZ office we would still like to extend our thanks to all of our members for their ongoing support and engagement this year.



Cressida Patrick
Biosecurity Manager

Contact Cress or Sarah if you have any questions on any biosecurity or regulatory matters.



Sarah Clark
Chief Executive

Biosecurity Update

BLACK-GRASS

Growers, agronomists, and seed company reps are reminded to report any grass weeds that appear unfamiliar or could resemble Black-grass (*Alopecurus myosuroides*). Early reporting remains one of our strongest tools for protecting the industry. November, December, and January are the easiest months to identify black-grass, as it begins to flower and mature—typically standing above the crop canopy. Further information about identifying black-grass is available [here](#).

Black-grass what to look for?

Black-grass seed heads are spike-like, sometimes green, but typically purplish in colour as they mature. Individual black grass plants produce between 2 to 20 heads per plant. Black grass has the capacity to produce 80 to 150 seeds per head. These seeds have a short dormancy period (several weeks). In general, black grass seedlings emerge from seeds sitting in the top 5 cm of soil. Ploughing buries the seed. Buried seeds can remain dormant in the soil for up to 11 years. Between 20- 30% of buried seeds survive burial each year, so after 3 years, about 1-3% of seeds will be viable. Black grass germination is stimulated by light, and the optimum soil temperature for germination is 15°C. The on-property eradication of black grass is a 3 to 5-year project.

Who to contact?

If you suspect Black-grass, do not disturb the plant. Take a photo and report it immediately to the MPI Pest and Disease Hotline (0800 80 99 66).

Update on previous black-grass detections

Since the confirmation of Black-grass in a post-harvest seed test in May 2025, a detailed management and surveillance plan has now been finalised and is in action. The affected paddock remains under a management programme that includes a crop rotation designed to optimise herbicide options and provide the best opportunity to detect any further plants. These measures have proven effective in all previous responses. All properties and sites of interest are now included in the surveillance programme.



The grass-straw bales from the affected property have been safely transported to a secure facility and will be destroyed using air-curtain incineration, the same proven method used successfully in the 2021 Black-grass incursion. This ensures no residual risk of spread.

The 2021 Black-grass response continues to progress as planned, with the surveillance schedule operating effectively. No Black-grass has been detected since the initial finds, and several of the first properties and associated sites have now completed surveillance, been confirmed free of Black-grass, and been removed from the active schedule.

Industry and Biosecurity New Zealand continue to work closely to maintain vigilance as spring growth progresses. Please remain alert for suspicious grass weeds. The importation of seed and grain always carries some risk, and Black-grass can appear anywhere. Finding it is not a cause for blame or shame—prompt reporting through the correct channels is essential to protect our industry.

Further information about Black-grass can be found [here](#) or on Environment Canterbury's website, available [here](#).

FALL ARMYWORM

The first fall armyworm (FAW) moths of the season have been detected in a trap in Northland. There is now a dedicated website for FAW information – bookmark www.fallarmyworm.nz for up-to-date regional reports.

YELLOW-LEGGED HORNETS

Yellow-legged hornets (*Vespa velutina*) have recently been sighted in the Auckland region. Yellow-legged hornets are a non-native hornet not known to be established in New Zealand. Biosecurity New Zealand is urging Aucklanders to continue to be on the lookout for yellow-legged hornets and their nests. The yellow-legged hornet is a biosecurity concern due to its ability to prey on honeybees and wild bee populations outside of their hive. As of 1st December 2025 - there have been 29 confirmed queen hornets found (based on specimens). Nineteen of the 29 confirmed queen hornets were found with either developed nests or evidence of nesting. To date 7 worker hornets have been found in nests. MPI are introducing advanced tracking technology from the Netherlands to trace hornets back to their nests.

Yellow-legged hornets cont.

Yellow-legged hornets construct large nests (up to 60 cm wide to 80 cm tall), usually high up in trees (Figure 3) or under the eaves of buildings. It suspends many layers of cells together and “wraps them up” to form a football sized structure, shown here. Do not disturb the nest if you see one, instead photograph it and contact Biosecurity New Zealand. An MPI factsheet on Yellow-legged hornets and up-to-date information is available [here](#).

The best surveillance tool we have is for people to report any sightings of suspected hornets or hornet nests. This can be done:

- online at report.mpi.govt.nz
- by calling our exotic pest and disease hotline on [0800 809 966](tel:0800809966)



A queen yellow-legged hornet develops an embryo or primary nest (pictured). Worker hornets raised in the primary nest build a larger, secondary nest during the summer. Photo credit: John de Carteret - Jersey

Figure 1. Yellow-legged hornet.



BROWN-MARMORATED STINK BUG (BMSB)

The BMSB risk season began September 2025. A total of 19 live BMSM have been detected since the start of October, compared with 6 during the same period last year. BMSB is a significant hitchhiker pest that can enter New Zealand through multiple pathways, including shipping containers, imported goods, travellers' baggage, mail, and personal packages. Its ability to shelter in vehicles, machinery, and cargo makes it difficult to detect at the border. Establishment of BMSB in New Zealand would threaten horticultural and arable production including maize, as it is highly polyphagous beetle which can cause direct crop damage as well as contamination issues.

Strict import requirements are in place, supported by enhanced inspection and treatment protocols at border facilities. These measures, combined with ongoing surveillance, significantly reduce the likelihood of BMSB entering and establishing in New Zealand. A BMSB poster is available for download from the Biosecurity Business Pledge website, available [here](#).

Regulations Approved for Key Farm Plastics Recycling Scheme (includes Seed Bags)

The Government approved regulations for a nationwide rural recycling scheme for farm plastics and agrichemicals.

What is covered?

The regulations confirm the scheme will cover key farm plastics, including:

- Small bags used for agricultural products (minimum size 16 to 40 kilograms when full) containing products such as seed, feed, fertiliser, soil and crop inputs, farm and animal supplements).
- Bulk woven polypropylene bags (over 40 kilograms when full) containing products such as seed, feed, fertiliser, soil amendments, minerals and bulk nutrition.
- Agrichemicals and their containers and drums
- Bale wrap and silage film

What this means?

The Government has approved the drafting of regulations to support the nationwide rural recycling scheme covering small bags, woven polypropylene bags, agrichemicals and plastic farm waste. Under the regulated scheme all producers and importers placing in-scope products on the New Zealand market will be required to pay a stewardship fee (per unit of in-scope product sold) to cover end-of-life management of the products. This fee does not apply for imported products that are subsequently re-exported in the same packaging without being used in NZ. Regulations will be drafted stating that in-scope agricultural products contained within plastics bags must be 'completed' products. For example:

Out-of-scope: Any plastic packaging used in the first stage where the ingredients (i.e. the seed) is provided to make the completed agricultural product (i.e. seed mix/feed), will not be captured by the scheme (fees won't apply). Agrecovery will continue to offer a voluntary service at a cost to the product supplier or consumer.

In-scope: Plastic packaging used in the second stage for the completed agricultural product that is placed on the market (the seed mix/feed), will be captured by the scheme (a fees will apply). The scheme creates a unified system where producers, sellers, and users share responsibility for the full product lifecycle, ensuring practical solutions for rural communities and the environment.

When does the scheme come into effect?

The Ministry for the Environment is working with the Parliamentary Council Office to draft the regulations. The final draft regulations for agrichemicals, their containers, and farm plastics are expected to be brought back to Cabinet for decision mid-2026. If the Government approves these, the draft regulations will come into force 6-12 months after publication. Likely to be late 2026, early 2027.

Further information

Information around in-scope products including changes made following consultation and general information of the Rural Recycling Scheme can be found here [Product stewardship agrichemicals, containers and farm plastics regulations | Ministry for the Environment](#)

Information on both providers is available on their websites - [Agrecovery here](#) and [Plasback here](#).

Gene Technology Bill

The Gene technology Bill aims to modernise New Zealand's gene technology regulations, replacing parts of the HSNO Act. SGNZ will establish a gene technology working group, consult with members and others, and help the industry prepare for changes in gene technology laws. More to follow on this next year.

The Health Committee reported back to parliament on the Gene Technology Bill on 10th October proposing changes to the Bill. The Bill is currently awaiting a Second Reading in Parliament, however the timeframe for this is unknown. Media reported that NZ First will not support the Bill into law without further major changes ([click here for RNZ report](#)). SGNZ understands there will be opportunities for further engagement with policy makers, particularly around the development of secondary legislation.

- The Health Committee report can be found on the Parliament website, here - [Gene Technology Bill](#).
- Further details about cabinet policy decisions are available here - [Regulation of Gene Technologies – Policy Decisions](#).

Europe reaches agreement on New Genomic Techniques (NGTs)

Meanwhile, the EU Council and Parliament reached a provisional agreement on a legal framework New Genomic Techniques (NGTs). The new regulation largely preserves the intent of the European Commission's original proposal – providing a framework that supports the development and use of conventional-like NGT plants.

Euroseeds, the voice of the European seed sector, sees the outcome as broadly positive, equipping farmers with improved crop varieties to address mounting challenges such as climate, pests, and productivity pressures. However, they noted that several new elements introduced during negotiations could bring added complexity, costs, and administrative burden. [Click here to read the announcement](#).

Treated Seed Group Standard

SGNZ continues to have regular engagement with the Environmental Protection Authority about the proposed group standard. We hosted EPA staff at seed treatment sites in Canterbury in September and we look forward to hosting them again at sites in Pukekohe and Auckland on the 8th December. These site visits provide the EPA with valuable insights into seed treatment practices in action, and real-world implications of policy options.

Phytosanitary certification systems and fees

In the last couple of months MPI released consultations about three separate aspects of phytosanitary certification: revisions to the technical standard for phytosanitary certificates; cost recovery for plant export certification; and cost recovery for MPI's new Trade Certification system. We have consulted with members and made a submission on two of these on behalf of the seed industry.

2026 Services to Seed Forum

April. More details to follow.

2026 Industry Golf Day

The 2026 industry golf day will be held Thursday 21st May, Tinwald Golf Course. Lock it in your calendar now. More details will follow in the new year.

2026 Women in Seed Day

The popular Women in Seed Day will be held 28th May 2026 at the Chateau on the Park. More details will follow in the new year.

2026 Seed & Grain New Zealand Annual Conference

Next year's annual conference of the association will be held in Napier. More details will follow in the new year.

International Events

2026 ISF World Seed Congress

Lisbon, Portugal; 18 – 20 May 2026

2026 ISTA Congress

Calgary, Canada; 22 – 25 June 2026

2026 Australian Seed Business

Australia; 18 – 20 August 2026

Euroseeds Congress

Valencia, Spain; 25 – 28 October 2026

Asian Seed Congress

Antalya, Turkey; 1 – 5 December 2026

Christmas Office Hours:

Please note that the SGNZ office will be closing for the Christmas and New Year period from:

- 4pm Monday 22nd December. Returning Monday 12th January.
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For anything urgent during this time, please contact Sarah Clark at 027 323 4307, or for biosecurity concerns, please contact Cressida Patrick at 022 018 3931.

All of us here at SGNZ want to extend our warmest wishes to you all for a joyful holiday season and a prosperous beginning to the new year. *Meri Kirihimete*

We look forward to seeing you in 2026.



TradeWindow Partnership

Benefits of using TradeWindow Origin

- Digital certificates of origin within minutes, for pre-approved goods
- Submissions are available 24/7, removes wait times and puts you in control
- Weekday assistance with new goods that require approval
- Self-service or assisted initial goods setup
- A friendly customer support team to help guide you through your setup and answer any questions you have

Click here to read more about the partnership: [Seed and Grain](#)

Christchurch Airport Parking

Do you and your staff travel and need affordable and secure airport parking?

Airpark Canterbury offers just that and as a member of Seed & Grain New Zealand you can sign up to receive the following benefits:

- Parking at a discounted rate of \$25.00 per day
- Free drive through car wash with every booking
- 10% discount on all onsite workshop servicing, brakes and tyres
- 10% discount on all onsite hand car grooming services
- Ability to use both Airpark Canterbury at 17-25 Logistics Drive and 264 Russley Road
- All bookings made will be charged to a monthly account, at the agreed rate

Email [Sharon](#) for more information.



President: [Edward Luisetti](#)

Vice President: [Jo Townshend](#)

Immediate Past President: [Charlotte Connoley](#)

Business Group Chairs

Forage & Turf Business Group: [Richard Merrilees](#)

Grains & Pulses Business Group: [Edward Luisetti](#)

Vegetable Seed Business Group: [Jo Townshend](#)

Services to Seed Business Group: [Steve Pugh](#)

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[Tom Sherratt](#)

[Stephen Bennett](#)

[Sam Clarke](#)

2026 Associate Councillor

Charlotte Burgess

Chief Executive

[Sarah Clark](#)

Biosecurity & Technical Manager

[Cressida Patrick](#)

Operations & Event Manager

[Sharon Dawe](#)

Meeting Schedule of SGNZ Executive Council

- Tuesday 27th January 2026: Templeton

If you have any matters to raise with the Executive Council, please contact Sarah Clark