

BIOSECURITY & REGULATORY NEWS

The past few months have brought exceptionally difficult weather, with prolonged heavy rainfall disrupting fieldwork across the arable sector. These conditions not only slowed essential operations – from drilling and spraying to harvest preparation but also heightened biosecurity risks at a time when vigilance is critical due to increased domestic and international movement during the holiday period. Thank you for your continued commitment and resilience during this challenging period.

In this issue we have a couple of items dealing with biosecurity readiness, including an update from Seed and Grain Readiness and Response Incorporated (SGRR), and a blurb about why SGNZ is engaging with Biosecurity New Zealand's foot and mouth disease workshop. We also have updates about four pests of relevance to the seed and grain industry: black-grass, brown marmorated stink bug, the yellow-legged hornet and fall-armyworm.



Cressida Patrick
Biosecurity Manager

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



Sarah Clark
Chief Executive

BIOSECURITY READINESS

Have your say: Should readiness be included in the Biosecurity (Response—Arable Crops Levy) Order 2023?

Seed and Grain Readiness and Response Incorporated (SGRR) are consulting on an amendment to allow the current levy to support both readiness and response activities. This would align the levy with SGRR's obligations under the Government Industry Agreement (GIA) for Biosecurity Readiness and Response.

A recent webinar on the proposed amendment to the Biosecurity (Response—Arable Crops Levy) Order 2023 was held which outlined the reasons for the change, its implications for the arable sector, and how readiness funding would be used.

[Click here](#) to watch the webinar.

Members are **strongly** encouraged to submit feedback on whether they support the proposed amendment. The consultation period has been **extended until 2 March 2026**.

SGNZ engages with Biosecurity New Zealand's Foot and Mouth Disease Workshop

Biosecurity New Zealand's Response team is hosting a foot and mouth disease (FMD) workshop in the lead up to an All-of-Government national exercise scheduled to take place in Wellington in July 2026. Biosecurity & Technical Manager, Cressida Patrick and Chief Executive, Sarah Clark will be attending the workshop in Rolleston on 4th March because of the inter-dependencies that the seed and grain industry has with the livestock industry. The workshops will equip us with up-to-date information and MPI's likely approach to a co-ordinated and effective response if a FMD outbreak were to occur in New Zealand. The workshop aims to identify critical risks and areas of vulnerability while collaboratively developing mitigation strategies - well before an actual outbreak may occur.

Biosecurity New Zealand aims to build a shared understanding of the scale of impact such an event could have—on industry, communities, and response systems—and the importance of early planning, coordination and preparedness.

SGRR PRIORITY PEST AND OTHER PEST UPDATES

Black-grass – what to look for?

Members are encouraged to remain vigilant for black-grass. Most black-grass emergence occurs in autumn after rain, with a smaller spring flush; plants are mostly visible from November to April once tillered and flowering. New Zealand has only had isolated Black-grass detections. Each response has relied on rapid reporting, strict movement controls, and repeated surveillance. This approach has prevented establishment, but it also shows how important early awareness is across the entire industry.

Seed is shed in late spring–summer, dormancy is short, and plants can reach maturity in about 100 days under favourable conditions.

An erect annual grass up to 1 m tall with narrow, smooth leaves, a 2–5 mm ligule, and slender spike-like seed heads that turn purplish to near-black, producing about 80–150 seeds per head. Further information available on SGRR's website [here](#) and [here](#).

Brown marmorated stink bug – the system is working

A single male brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB) was detected in a surveillance trap in Auckland, during routine monitoring. Biosecurity New Zealand responded immediately, with site checks finding no further insects and additional traps deployed while diagnostic testing continues. BMSB is a serious threat to many crops across the arable sector, including maize, pulses, vegetable seeds and cereal crops. Feeding damage can reduce yield, lower quality, and create market risk. Early detection is therefore critical.

This event shows that the system is working as intended. The detection remains under investigation. The trap was part of a kiwifruit surveillance programme supported by Kiwifruit Vine Health and Zespri Innovation, complementing the national BMSB network. While not escalated to a formal response at this stage, the detection highlights strong system readiness. Members are encouraged to remain vigilant and report any suspect insects promptly via MPI's Pest & Disease Hotline - 0800 80 99 66.

Brown marmorated stink bug cont.

BMSB fact sheet available [here](#).



How can I identify BMSB?

There are currently other species of stink bugs found in New Zealand that could be confused with the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug (BMSB).

Key distinguishing features of the adult BMSB are:

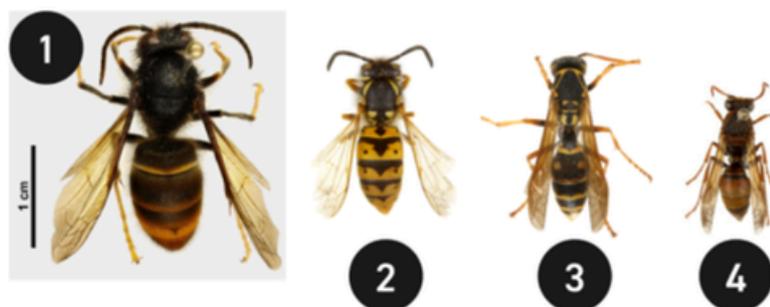
- its size (14–17mm);
- white banding on the antennae;
- alternate black and white markings on the abdomen.

Yellow legged hornets

Yellow-legged hornets (*Vespa velutina*) are a non-native pest hornet not known to be established in New Zealand. They primarily feed on bees, wasps, and flies and may compete with native insects and birds for food, as well as deliver a very painful sting.

Yellow-legged hornets have only been detected in Auckland. To date, there have been 51 confirmed queen hornets found (based on specimens) and 62 nests. Thirty-eight of those nests contained a queen hornet. Biosecurity New Zealand is using radio-tracking transmitters, thermal drones, extensive ground surveillance, increased trapping networks to closely monitoring the situation. MPI is also encouraging people to remain vigilant and report any suspected hornet or nest sightings via the exotic pest hotline ([0800 80 99 66](tel:0800809966)).

Know the difference between hornets and common wasps



From left to right, biggest to smallest: 1 Yellow-legged hornet, 2 German wasp, 3 Asian paper wasp, 4 Australian paper wasp.

Further information can be found [here](#)

Fall-armyworm

Fall armyworm is established in NZ and is under long-term management. Significant FAW populations have been located in several areas, especially in Northland, where infestations of up to 50% have required insecticide treatment and further FAW moth flights have been recorded across New Zealand over the past two weeks. In the Waikato and Auckland regions, smaller populations of FAW appear to be suppressed by natural parasitism.

In Westland, FAW levels are similar to the 2022/23 season. However, the risk they pose is higher this year due to poor spring weather and delayed planting. Other regions also report replanting or late establishment extending into late 2025. These later crops require close and frequent checks. Visit www.fallarmyworm.nz for the latest updates and information regarding FAW in maize and sweetcorn.

Important Dates

MARCH

- 3 March: SGNZ/MPI Imports_Exports Meeting
- 24 March: SGNZ Executive Meeting, Christchurch

MAY

- 18 – 20 May: ISF World Seed Congress, Lisbon Portugal
- 21 May: Industry Golf Tournament, Tinwald Golf Course
- 28 May: SGNZ Women in Seed Forum, Chateau on the Park, Christchurch

JUNE

- 10 - 13 June: Fielddays, Mystery Creek, Hamilton
- 16 – 17 June: SGNZ Executive Meeting & government officials meetings, Wellington
- 22 – 25 June: ISTA Congress, Calgary, Canada

AUGUST

- 18 – 20 August: Australian Seed Business, Melbourne, Australia
- 20 August: Arable Awards of New Zealand, Christchurch
- 25 August: SGNZ Executive Meeting, Napier
- 26 August: SGNZ Annual General Meeting, Napier
- 26 – 27 August: SGNZ Conference, Napier

OCTOBER

- 25 – 28 October: Euroseeds, Valencia, Spain

NOVEMBER

- 25 November: Crops - Foundation for Arable Research, Chertsey, Canterbury
- 28 - 30 November: New Zealand Grasslands Conference (in conjunction with NZ Agronomy Society & NZ Society Animal Production), Blenheim

DECEMBER

- 1 – 5 December: Asian Seed Congress, Antalya, Turkey

Executive Members



Edward Luisetti
President



Jo Townshend
Vice President



Charlotte Connoley
Immediate Past President

Business Group Chairs



Steve Pugh
Services to Seed



Richard Merrilees
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Jo Townshend
Vegetable Seed



Mike Turner
Grains & Pulses

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Tom Sherratt



Stephen Bennett



Sam Clarke



Charlotte Burgess

Associate Councillor



Committee members pictured above from left to right:
Fred Milford-Cottom (Chair), Celia Hutchinson (Barenbrug); James Taylor (SPS Pukekohe); Cassidy Sprott (PGG)

Young Radicles proudly supported by



SGNZ Staff



*Staff pictured left to right:
Sarah Clark Chief Executive;
Cress Patrick Biosecurity & Technical Manager;
Sharon Dawe Operations & Events Manager*

