



New Zealand Farm Forestry Association  
Oranga Rākau Aotearoa

# Forest Biosecurity Committee June 2022 - Update

The Forest Biosecurity Committee (FBC) met virtually on the 18 May for its second quarterly meeting where it navigated a range of topics, some of which it wanted to highlight.

## **Online biosecurity training now available**

With support from the Forest Growers Levy Trust, the FBC has worked with SPS Biota over the last few years to develop basic and easy to access online biosecurity training modules. The focus of the training is really to introduce front line workers and those working and operating in our forests to the concept of biosecurity and its relevance to forestry, why protecting our forests is so important, and how they can help to protect our forests.

The training is free and accessible on SPS Biota's eLearning hub (<https://spsbiota.co.nz/pages/elearning-hub>). Registration (free) is required to access the training.

SPS Biota also offer additional services to aid the management and coordination of staff training (i.e., verify completion, currency, refreshers etc.) which will be of value to larger organisations seeking to ensure that their staff or contractors are familiar with biosecurity risk management.

## **Forest Biosecurity Surveillance (update and access to data reminder)**

The updated Forest Biosecurity Surveillance programme (FBS) has now been underway for four years. Both the field surveillance delivered by SPS Biota, and the diagnostics service delivered by Scion continue to progress well. MPI have agreed to continue to fund 50% of the costs of FBS as per our GIA operational agreement. MPI have also agreed to provide in-kind diagnostics support to the FBS programme in the form of nematology, bacteriology, and virology diagnostics.

Work is also underway on improvements to the FBS model (used to allocate surveillance effort) to address gaps in the model that have to date been plugged by the Non model allocated (NMA) surveillance programme. Once complete this will need to be assessed by Scion and then it will be applied in the 2023 surveillance year.

A range of improvements to the forest health database have been recommended following a review of this system by Scion.

A reminder to companies who undertake their own forest health assessments - you can access the diagnostics data in the Forest Health Database. Contact the FOA Biosecurity Manager to arrange access ([brendan.gould@nzfoa.org.nz](mailto:brendan.gould@nzfoa.org.nz)).

## **Research Strategy**

Over the last year the FBC has been working on a new and updated Forest Biosecurity Research Strategy. The aim of the strategy is to establish and prioritise the key areas of focus for forest biosecurity research to contribute to improved forest biosecurity outcomes and to communicate this to the forest industry, researchers, and research funding agencies with the industries strategic priorities for forest biosecurity related research.

Substantial progress has been made to date and the FBC hopes to finalise this and make it available in the coming months.

## **Lepidoptera Readiness (General update and FAW response)**

Last year MPI and the FOA initiated discussions under the GIA framework to determine whether there was interest by other primary industry GIA partners to develop and progress a program of work to improve NZ readiness to respond to a range of Lepidoptera (moth) pest incursions. This resulted in the formation of the Lepidoptera Readiness Working Group comprising 14 GIA partners which undertook a stock take of our current state of readiness and identified gaps and areas of focus for a work programme to improve our state of readiness.

Work is currently underway to develop a Lepidoptera Readiness Strategy, a work programme, and Operational Agreement between all the parties to deliver this. Associated cost share negotiations are likely to present challenges.

### **Pitch Canker (link)**

The Threat Specific Readiness Manual for *Fusarium circinatum* (Pitch Canker) has now been finalised and is available on the FOA website (<https://www.nzfoa.org.nz/resources/file-libraries-resources/forest-biosecurity/866-pitch-canker-readiness-manual>).

### **Plant Pass (launch and forestry plan)**

Plant Pass and the associated Plant Buyers accord have now been officially launched (<https://www.plantpass.org.nz/>). Plant Pass is a voluntary certification scheme for New Zealand plant producers recognising good biosecurity practice and providing assurance for plant buyers. It is designed to harness the critical skills and observations that exist in the plant production industry to strengthen biosecurity.

The FBC is working to develop a Plantation Forest Nursery module before it recommends the forestry industry participation in the scheme. The aim of the module is to ensure that the Plant Pass Standard is adapted and interpreted to account for the unique requirements of the forestry sector while still achieving better biosecurity outcomes that reduce the biosecurity risk associated with this risk pathway. We are hoping to have a draft of this module completed this year and to potentially trial this with a couple of nurseries.

Once this module is finalised and available the FBC will be advocating for forest nurseries to participate in the scheme and for forest companies to consider signing up to the Plant Buyers Accord.

### **Biosecurity guides**

The FBC has identified that there are significant benefits in improving biosecurity risk management in the industry through the development of a range of biosecurity guides and guidelines. It will be commencing work to start developing a range of plantation forest specific guides and guidelines.

The initial areas of focus will be to develop a general biosecurity guideline to help improve the understanding of biosecurity and understanding actions that the plantation forestry industry can implement to help reduce this risk, and the development of guidelines to aid the plantation forest sector meet the requirements of the new National Pests Management Plan – Kauri protection.

### **TUR advisory service overview**

The FBC had an excellent presentation by Rob Tane, Senior Advisor, Māori Engagement who provided an overview of the new and establishing Planning and Advisory Service (PAS) and its team members at Te Uru Rākau – New Zealand Forest Service (TUR – NZFS).

The PAS team aims to make engagement with TUR – NZFS more accessible and consistent and to enable good advice to be readily accessed across the forestry sector and Tangata Whenua.