
Dutch elm disease eradication begins in Napier

A programme to eradicate Dutch elm disease (*Ophiostoma novo-ulmi*) from Napier began recently.

Dutch elm disease has effectively decimated the elm population throughout Europe, including the United Kingdom, and America.

To date Napier has only one infestation of the disease which is localised to Sturm's Gully on Bluff Hill within the Napier residential area. Infected elms were discovered during a routine port environment survey in December 1993. Since that time more than 20 diseased elms have been removed.

According to Ministry of Forestry Senior Forest Health Officer, Brent Rogan, the disease is spreading through the remaining 180 elms in the gully through root grafting. Elm tree roots often join together underground. A New Zealand Forest Research Institute survey of the root network two years ago found extensive spreading of the disease fungus.

"We've been monitoring the situation and the only viable option is to extract all of the elms in the gully and ensure the disease is eradicated from the area," said Mr Rogan.

The process involves injecting the trees with herbicide, followed three months later by felling and mulching on site. The herbicide will kill off the root systems supporting the disease.

"Fortunately there are a large number of mature trees of other species in the gully and these will not be affected by the herbicide."

The area will be replanted with non-elm species.

The Ministry of Forestry is working closely with the Napier City Council and affected residents with elms on their properties along the edge of the gully.

The Council's Chief Executive Officer, Neil Taylor, says he's relieved the operation is going ahead.

"There is no doubt that the elms in Napier, Hawkes Bay and the rest of the country, are under threat and we must act while the disease is contained in Sturm's Gully. I would like to thank the residents affected for their cooperation in the past and am confident they will continue to work with us to eliminate this disease once and for all," said Mr Taylor.

"I appeal to all Napier residents and visitors – please don't remove any wood or debris from Sturm's Gully – it may be infected."

Dutch elm disease was first discovered in Auckland in 1989 and has spread to several suburbs but now looks to be contained.

"We now have an opportunity to eradicate the disease," said Mr Rogan.

Only two sites of the disease were found in Auckland this summer among the population of 12,200 recorded elm locations. Disease spread in Auckland has been by an introduced bark beetle *Scolytus mullistriatis*. Extensive trapping in the city has revealed a marked decrease in beetles carrying the disease; however, transporting infested elm material as firewood or garden debris can also spread the

fungus.

At this stage there is no indication of the disease carrying insect in Napier but it has been trapped as far south of Auckland as Tirau.

Symptoms of Dutch elm disease are wilting branches with curled yellow or brown leaves falling from the tree prematurely. The fungus can spread from single branches to cover the entire tree within one to two weeks. Anyone finding a tree with these symptoms should contact the nearest Ministry of Forestry office.

Ministry of Forestry

FOA President responds to early-harvest criticisms

Low-density wood is both a challenge and an opportunity for forest owners.

That's the view of FOA President Erle Robinson in response to criticism that the industry is producing too much juvenile wood.

An increasing level of juvenile wood being produced and a consequent decline in the strength of structural timber entering the industry were cited as matters of concern by the Timber Industry Federation in a letter to the FOA late last year.

Mr Robinson says the industry was tending to harvest younger stands. "Companies are making use of the low-density corewood more than they have in the past, both for economic reasons and because there are increasing markets for that wood."

"The onus is really on the companies to direct that wood to areas where it is better suited in terms of performance."

"It's a challenge to engineers and producers to use the wood in such a way that structural qualities aren't critical and incorporate it into products that will sell."

"It also represents an opportunity; if companies can successfully utilise this low-density material, they can access their wood resources and service markets a lot earlier."

Mr Robinson says the issue was essentially one between the buyer and the seller. "Buyers must make their quality requirements clear; the onus will be on sellers to meet them." **Reprinted from NZ Forestry Bulletin**

New CEO for Forest Owners

The NZ Forest Owners Association (FOA) has appointed Rob McLagan as its new chief executive – replacing Ken Shirley, now deputy leader of ACT New Zealand.

Mr McLagan was CEO of Federated Farmers for 16 years and, more recently, Director-General of International Business Councils. His strong background in rural sector advocacy, international affairs and professional administration will be emphasised by the Forest Owners.

"While much is expected politically and economically of our industry," says FOA President, Erle Robinson, "there are plenty of threats that could prevent us from achieving our true potential."

"Influencing the politics of Government, promoting the wealth-creating potential of forestry while minimising any negative impacts of political change on forest growers have been our priorities for some time."

"Rob has accumulated considerable experience in forestry and agricultural policy issues – including development of the Resource Management Act – and we expect he will have a high profile in our many initiatives to secure the best possible environment for New Zealand's forest growers."

Mr McLagan took up his appointment in early May.