

Biosecurity

Chris Goulding

More years ago than I care to mention, before starting university I carried out my practical forest work on an English estate. As part of the work, we were cleaning a regenerating mixed hardwood stand on a valley side – cutting away competing woody vegetation to release the young trees. As this was limestone country the predominant species was English Ash, *Fraxinus excelsior*. Even by now, the trees will still not have reached middle age, valuations based on discounted present net worth meaning little to the estate's objectives of management. The woodland now ought to be as beautiful as Ash hardwood forest can be.

In 2012, Ash dieback disease entered England. Caused by the fungus *Hymenoscyphus pseudoalbidus*, previously known as *Chalara fraxinea*, leaf loss and crown dieback are quickly followed by death. The pathogen came from the continent where it first appeared 20 years ago and is now entrenched, most probably arriving from Asia. The fungus spreads rapidly and it is expected that very soon between 90 and 98 per cent of the Ash trees in Britain will die, uneven-aged mixed-species forests notwithstanding. There are currently no effective measures to mitigate or prevent the disease. Felling infected stands is of little use as the fungus lives in the forest litter. The ban on importing Ash saplings and nursery stock from Europe, imposed in October 2012, was too late.

This issue of the Journal has forest protection and biosecurity as its theme. New Zealand has strict regulations about biosecurity and the importation of soil, plant and animal material, some of the most stringent in the world. If the friendly little doggie at the airport arrivals hall wags its tail and sits in front of you, this is not a good sign.

There are four papers that discuss the threats to New Zealand's forests and the measures taken to reduce risk. In the lead article, Eckehard Brockerhoff and Lindsay Bulman explain the risks to our plantation forests and provide an overview of approaches and methods to manage pathways and prevent invasions. Lindsay Bulman and Peter Gadgill present a history of research and control of forest health in New Zealand, extending back over a century to the present day. Peter Scott and Nari Williams write on *Phytophthora* spp. diseases that currently cause Red Needle Cast and the Kauri dieback that has had a devastating impact at some sites, with the threat of damaging consequences from other *Phytophthora* species abroad.

Stephen Pawson, Nari Williams, Ian Gear and John Armstrong discuss the phytosanitary conditions and treatments applied to New Zealand's forest products exports in order to prevent the trans-shipment of pathogens to customers, maintain market access and allow trade not to be disrupted. The Last Word is provided by Brian Richardson, commenting that the management of biosecurity threats requires sound policy and regulatory frameworks, and effective management, underpinned by quality science.

Bruce Manley's professional paper on the 2013 survey of discount rates used in forest valuation is the ninth such survey in a sequence stretching back to 1997. This most recent survey covered 16 forest valuers to provide information on 28 New Zealand and four Australian transactions. Thom Erdle, Professor at the Faculty of Forestry, University of New Brunswick chaired the panel that in 2013 conducted a formal review of the BForSc degree programme as part of the University of Canterbury's Academic Quality Assurance programme and he summarises the review in his paper. The School of Forestry is the only one of its kind in New Zealand and Australia. The programme is sound and well-delivered but is vulnerable because of low enrolment; its staff resources are at a critical minimum. The School should continue aiming to graduate some 30 students each year.

There is a short description of the NZIF annual conference held in Napier this July. Andrew McEwen, the retiring President of the NZIF, was awarded the Thomas Kirk award for eminence to recognise his outstanding contribution to New Zealand forestry. The NZIF Forester of the Year was awarded to Paul Nicholls, Managing Director of Rayonier NZ.

Perhaps the most significant presentation at the conference was that by Wiremu Edwards, a challenge not just a presentation, to 'stand in the gap' even when the odds are against us. The challenge is to us all, from trainee forest worker to the most senior CEO, to ensure that everyone goes home safely after work to his or her family and loved ones. He stated that it is about 'people, people, people' and asked 'are the right changes being made' within the industry. That challenge was dedicated to his son, killed in a forestry accident, 26 March 2013.