

# Hon Andrew Hoggard

Minister for Biosecurity  
Minister for Food Safety  
Associate Minister of Agriculture (Animal Welfare, Skills)  
Associate Minister for the Environment



MIN25-0073

Gretchen Robertson  
Chairperson, Otago Regional Council  
By email: [Kim.Wainscott@orc.govt.nz](mailto:Kim.Wainscott@orc.govt.nz)  
Cc: [Richard.Saunders@orc.govt.nz](mailto:Richard.Saunders@orc.govt.nz)

Dear Gretchen,

Thank you for your letter dated 13 December 2024, regarding the invasive freshwater clam species *Corbicula fluminea* and *Corbicula australis* (corbicula).

I share your concerns about the threat these clams pose to our precious freshwater ecosystems. Biosecurity New Zealand is actively involved in addressing this issue, funding a significant initial response, and continuing to invest in and plan our long-term management efforts collaboratively with our regional partners, iwi and others.

The response has now transitioned to a long-term programme with the dual focus of containment of the clams to known areas of infestation and exclusion from new areas. Broadly, this includes national surveillance, public information and behaviour change, controlled area notices to prevent movement of risk goods, enforcement, preparation for range extensions, and operational research. An important part of this work is to work towards the establishment of a national pathway management plan to manage the risk of spread of a wide range of aquatic pests, including corbicula species. However, this is likely to take some time to develop and implement with partners.

Regional councils should consider how to manage the risk in their regions, and I am pleased to see from your letter that is exactly what you are doing. I encourage you and other South Island councils to assess use of your regulatory powers in relation to the corbicula threat, including whether to include corbicula in regional pest management plans and under what status. I am aware of the initiative that Bay of Plenty Regional Council has in place under its Regional Pest Management Plan, requiring boat owners using the Rotorua Lakes to certify their vessels are free of biosecurity risks. I encourage other regional councils to consider similar approaches.

The Cook Strait is an important engagement point to prevent the movement of freshwater invasive species like corbicula, didymo, and hornwort. Since 2005, programmes have targeted Cook Strait travellers with biosecurity messaging through the Check, Clean, Dry initiative, ambassadors, and signage at ferry terminals, and more recently through geo-located digital advertising campaigns. While I appreciate the intent, your suggested mandatory measures for vehicles and boats travelling across the Cook Strait would impose considerable additional costs and disruption to travellers, and is not seen as practical at this time.

Preventing the spread of corbicula is a serious challenge for us nationally. I was pleased to see last year a \$10 million research grant awarded to the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) to lead a programme to develop innovative control methods. This may mean that, going forward, we will have options beyond containment and pathway management.

Thank you again for your concern and support in protecting our waterways.

Yours sincerely,



Hon Andrew Hoggard  
**Minister for Biosecurity**