

A demonstration by Ministry for Primary Industries detector dogs was part of the symposium which launched Tauranga Moana Biosecurity Capital in Tauranga in October.  
(Photos: Jamie Troughton/Dscribe Media)

**Tauranga Moana  
Biosecurity Capital**

# Putting biosecurity in top place

By Elaine Fisher

**All New Zealanders need to be involved in biosecurity and Tauranga is taking the lead.**

Many communities claim to be the capital of something and build giant icons to support their claims, be it kiwifruit at Te Puke, carrots at Ohakune or the drink Lemon and Paeroa at Paeroa.

However, an oversized statute isn't likely to be erected to trumpet Tauranga's 'capital' claim because it's an absence of something, not a presence to which the community aspires.

In mid-October the region officially became Tauranga Moana Biosecurity Capital (TMBC) with the launch of the initiative by Minister for Biosecurity and Primary Industries, Damien O'Connor.

It was appropriate that Tauranga, as New Zealand's export trade capital, should become its biosecurity capital too, he told the event attended by around 80 representatives of iwi, local and regional councils, industry bodies, community and business groups with an involvement or interest in biosecurity.

The Minister said biosecurity depends on the actions of every New Zealander and he congratulated TMBC for its formation as one of the lead initiatives for the government's *Ko Tatou This Is Us* campaign.

TMBC aims to be an exemplar for other regions to emulate, all with the aim of enlisting 4.7 million New Zealanders into a biosecurity team to keep the country safe from unwanted pests and disease.

Biosecurity New Zealand head, Roger Smith, among the speakers at the launch said the world and trade was changing, "and we have to change how we do biosecurity".

"More ships, bigger ships and sometimes dirty ships are arriving as are more travellers with different wants and needs. Other countries are expanding their exports to us making biosecurity more difficult. We need to look through a different lens and fundamentally change how we work together."

The Biosecurity 2025 strategy had brought together industries which had never talked to each other including non-Government organisations which had not talked to Government. Instead of blaming someone else for biosecurity breaches, he said the initiative had "started something good" in which everyone accepted ownership of biosecurity and took on the challenge of the sustained effort required to keep unwanted pests and disease out. As well as recruiting every New Zealander to the biosecurity team, the aim was for every business, no matter what their sector, to make biosecurity part of their values.

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**Minister for Biosecurity and Primary Industries Damien O'Connor launching the initiative Tauranga Moana Biosecurity Capital.**



**John Walsh, deputy director of general strategy performance and engagement with the Ministry for Primary Industries encourages everyone to use the brand *Ko Tatou This Is Us* and come on board with the biosecurity campaign.**

It's people who will save NZ from unwanted aliens and all 4.7 million Kiwi have a role to play in keeping them out, John Walsh, deputy director of general strategy performance and engagement with the Ministry for Primary Industries told the seminar.

Major biosecurity breaches have the potential to irreversibly change New Zealanders' way of life, but only around two percent of the population recognise that threat.

"Around 96 percent of New Zealanders get that biosecurity is important but when those surveyed were pressed for more specific details it revealed most did not think that if biosecurity went wrong it would have a big impact on their lives," he said.

Invasions of unwanted pests and diseases had the potential to affect every aspect of Kiwi life from gardening, to food, to primary production, to recreation, to industry, to employment, to the natural environment, which is why the campaign *Ko Tatou This Is Us* had been launched.

The campaign, which includes a television commercial designed to build an emotional connection among the public with the things they value, is augmented by social media blogs, newspaper and radio advertisements and a website, all designed to raise awareness of biosecurity.

"We invite everyone to use the brand *Ko Tatou This Is Us* and come on board with the campaign," he said.

TMBC programme director, Andrew Harrison, said the aim of the TMBC initiative was to increase local awareness about biosecurity and, "why it matters deeply to all of us who live here and just what would be lost if exotic pests enter or establish here".

"It's about a pretty powerful, knowledgeable group standing shoulder to shoulder and saying it's absolutely essential we pool our expertise and resources for the sake of the environment, our taonga, our economy."

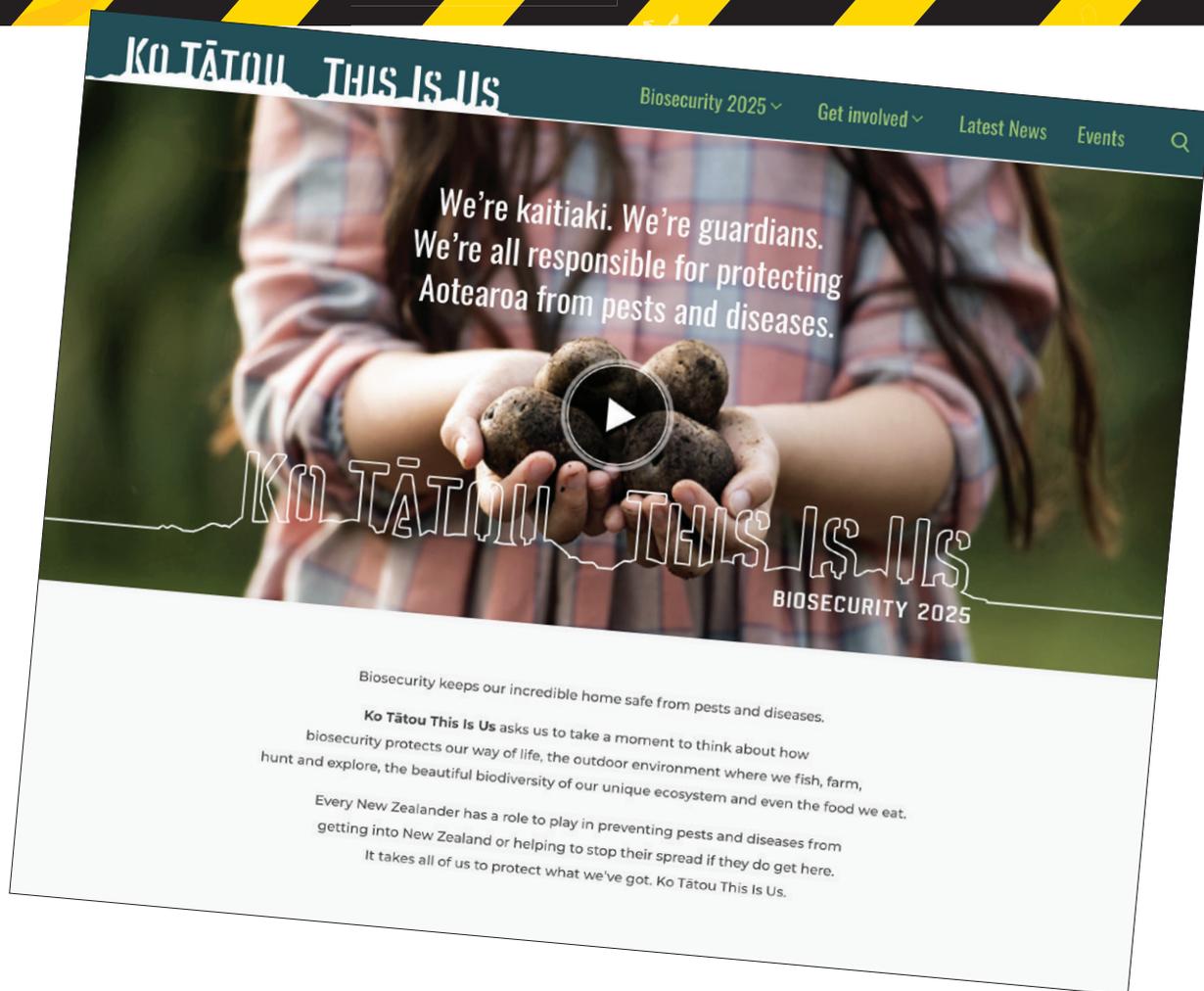
There are many ways people can take action to support biosecurity, and not just when returning from overseas travel.

That included reporting something unusual seen in their orchard, farm or garden; carrying out good hygiene practices (around cleaning vehicles and shoes) getting involved in pest control projects, teaching rangatahi (young people) about biodiversity and biosecurity and being vigilant when bringing imported goods into the country, including online purchases.

"It's important that nothing else is coming in with them," he said.

Carlton Bidois, co-chair of TMBC, said tanga tu whenua have much to lose from biosecurity breaches in both an economic and social sense.

Serious biosecurity incursion would impact on the Māori primary industry economy which is worth at least \$40 billion. Māori interests account for and 10 percent of kiwifruit investment, 12 percent of sheep and beef units, 10 percent of



**“It’s people who will save NZ from unwanted aliens and all 4.7 million Kiwi have a role to play in keeping them out.”**

dairy products, 40 percent of fishing quota and 36 percent of forestry.

“That’s the dollar economy in which Māori would suffer the same impact as others but if we look at the risks to the cultural economy, you can’t put a dollar figure on that,” he said.

“Māori would take a double hit as for iwi the environment is part of our health, knowledge, language, respect, spirituality, guardianship, leadership, self-determination and cultural practice. Biosecurity threats are starting to pull apart our cultural fabric. For example, we whakapapa to the kauri, they are our family.”

Carlton said Māori had much to lose if the disease kauri die-back kills the giant trees. It had not yet arrived in the Bay of Plenty and the region may become the saviour for the

trees, but only if everyone worked to protect them. Doing so is among the goals of TMBC which also include growing biosecurity awareness and social licence and running joint campaigns such as Biosecurity Week in October.

TMBC aims to advocate for better biosecurity for the region and be a catalyst for action. Enabling collaboration to achieve better results, sharing information and lessons, and taking opportunities to grow the regional team committed to biosecurity excellence, are also aims.

The founding members of the TMBC coalition are; New Zealand Avocado, Forest Owners Association, Kiwifruit Vine Health, Western Bay of Plenty District Council, Better Border Security (B3), Zespri, Biosecurity New Zealand, House of Science, University of Waikato, Trevelyan’s, Ngai Te Rangī Iwi, Ngati Ranginui Iwi, Tauranga City Council, the Department of Conservation, Landcare Trust, Toi-Ohomai Institute of Technology, Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Port of Tauranga and the National Science Challenges New Zealand’s Biological Heritage.

More information is available at [www.tmbiosecurity.co.nz/](http://www.tmbiosecurity.co.nz/) and [www.thisisus.nz/](http://www.thisisus.nz/)