

Group formed to combat invasive weed in district

STOPPING the spread of the invasive weed Tutsan is the target of a new group formed in Piopio this month.

Tutsan, branded the 'new gorse' is becoming a growing problem in the district having already taken hold in Taumarunui and Ruapehu with signs of it spreading into Waitomo.

The group was formed following a Tutsan Action Group (TAG) meeting at the Piopio Senior Citizens Hall on July 18.

More than 50 people attended the meeting where members of the Taumarunui-based TAG spoke about the plant and ways to prevent its invasion.

HARSH WARNING

Organiser Mark Verry says the meeting was successful in "spreading" the word on stopping Tutsan.

"The speakers had lots of very important information and photos of how bad Tutsan can get which served as a harsh warning to everyone that came," he says.

"The whole point of the meeting was to alert people to the problem and we certainly achieved that.

"It was a wonderful success and I'm sure, through word of mouth, the message of stopping Tutsan will spread very quickly now."

FOUND ON ROAD

Mr Verry took up the 'Stop Tutsan' challenge after finding 300-400 plants alongside a 2km stretch of road near his Haku Rd property in Piopio where there were only three or four plants two years ago.

He believes it is spread mostly by council roadside mowing and once established is difficult to control as many herbicides are not effective against it.

Also at the meeting was Waitomo mayor Brian Hanna and rural ward councillor Phil Brodie from Piopio who supported Mr Verry's cause.

"My presentations to council in the past (about roadside mowing spreading Tutsan) were received very negatively as I was told they had no responsibility in the spread whatsoever," says Mr Verry.

"But the best thing to come out of the meeting was they (council) reassessed their position and Brian Hanna told the group that council would be taking active steps not to spread Tutsan with roadside mowing anymore and clean up what is there now."



SPREAD THE WORD: An action group led by Piopio farmer Mark Verry (above) has been formed to prevent the spread of Tutsan (below) in the North King Country. FILE PICS



Happy that progress is being made, Mr Verry has set up the contact group with Department of Conservation's

Dave Smith, Waikato Regional Council's Chris Hale and Mr Brodie to liaise with the district council.

Cuppa with a Coppa proves popular with locals

FORGET high-tech surveillance, Otorohanga Police are openly listening in on public conversations.

In an effort to connect directly with local residents, Constable Ben Parsonage launched a new initiative – 'Cuppa with a Coppa' – this month giving people the chance to voice their concerns one-on-one with a local officer.

Twelve people sat down with Mr Parsonage for a cuppa at the Otorohanga Support House on July 18, but such was its popularity, four were turned away due to lack of time.

All were welcome to discuss in confidence issues important to them over a cuppa.

Mr Parsonage says he came up with the idea to show the community "we do listen".

"When I approach people during my regular police enquiries, they often tell you a lot of things that are going on in their neighbourhood that annoy them, just because you're there.

"But I also noticed that a lot of those people don't want to come into the station to tell us what's happening because they think they're wasting our time.

"So this was just a simple idea to show people we do care and we do have the time to listen."

He says the next 'Cuppa with a Coppa' might have to be longer to cater for more people.

"If any member of the public wants to talk to us about any particular problem, come in and see us, because it is actually a good use of our time and that's what we're here for.

"Just by sitting down and having a cup of tea with the local residents showed that we do have the time and I probably could have been there a lot longer and not wasted one minute of my day.

"So I'm predicting the next cuppa session might have to go a little bit longer which only proves it's something the community really appreciates."

Mr Parsonage hopes to host another Cuppa with a Coppa in September when he returns from leave.

Have you heard
the one about
the lawyer . . .

Legal matters are no joke!

For professional assistance
and advice . . .

FORGESON LAW
Formerly Low Chapman and Forgeson

36 Taupiri St, Te Kuiti
Ph 07 878 8036 Fax 07 878 8035
Dianne Forgeson LLB Kevin Forgeson LLB

**WOF now
available.**

Tyre Boss

43 Turongo St, Otorohanga. Ph 873 8027. 24 hours.

We recommend:

BRIDGESTONE

Firestone

SUPERCAT

BRIDGESTONE TYRE CENTRE