

Regional Pest Management Strategy Operational Plan

2013 – 2017



**MARLBOROUGH
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Photos

Front cover: The flowers of Cotton Thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*).

Rear cover: White-Edged Nightshade (*Solanum marginatum*) in the outer Marlborough Sounds.

Regional Pest Management Strategy Operational Plan 2013-2017

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Version	Date	Description of Changes	Pages Changed
2	26/8/2014	Minor alterations of targets and addition of two new targets. See 2013/2014 Operational Plan Report for further detail.	6, 7, 14, 16
4	23/9/2016	Minor alterations of targets and addition of two new targets. See 2015/2016 Operational Plan Report for further detail.	5, 6, 7, 8, 13, 15

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1. Introduction

The Regional Pest Management Strategy for Marlborough (the Strategy) was made operative on 17 December 2012. The Strategy was reviewed under existing legislation given the review commenced prior to the 18 September 2012 amendments to the Biosecurity Act 1993. As a result, it will be referred to as the “Strategy” until a time it is reviewed under the amended legislation. Terminology and other technical references will also match the existing Strategy.

The purpose of the Strategy is to provide a framework for the efficient and effective management or eradication of pests and unwanted organisms so as to:

- (a) Minimise actual and potential adverse and unintended effects associated with the targeted pests; and
- (b) Maximise the effectiveness of individual pest management through a regionally co-ordinated approach.

The Strategy classifies a number of plants and animals in the region as pests, and specifies the management regime for each pest. For each pest the management programme sets out the effects of the pest to be addressed, the objective to be achieved, the main methods to achieve the objective and the rules relating to each pest.

1.1 Purpose of Operational Plan

The Operational Plan has been prepared in accordance with Section 100B of the Biosecurity Act 1993 and identifies and outlines the nature and scope of activities the Marlborough District Council intends to undertake in the implementation of its Regional Pest Management Strategy for the period from 2013 to 2017.

Statements on performance measures are included in the Operational Plan. This will enable key stakeholders and the community to judge the performance of the Marlborough District Council as the Management Agency for the Strategy.

1.2 Linkages

The Operational Plan is integrated, as far as possible, with the Marlborough District Council's Regional Policy Statement, Resource Management Plans and the Marlborough District Council Long Term Plan 2012-2022. The Long Term Plan provides an overview of all Marlborough District Council functions, including pest management and biosecurity activities.

This Operational Plan should also be read in conjunction with the Strategy.

2. Pest Management Programmes

2.1 Introduction

The Strategy classifies 33 plant and 4 animal species as pests because they cause, or are capable of causing, a significant negative impact on Marlborough's economy and/or environment. The Strategy separates individual pests into classifications, which require various levels of intervention.

The management regime for each pest applies to all or a specified part of the land within the district. In most situations the obligation lies with the land occupier to actually carry out the control of these pests. The only exception is for pests classified as 'Total Control' where either the Marlborough District Council or the Department of Conservation will implement control programmes directly.

Marlborough District Council is primarily responsible for the co-ordination of pest control programmes, ensuring occupiers comply with their obligations, carrying out surveillance to determine new infestations of pests and educating and advising land occupiers as to the most appropriate form of control for each pest.

2.2 Pest Plant Status

The table below summarises the district's pest plants and their designated status as classified in the Strategy.

Plant Pest Species	Status	Comments
African Feathergrass	Total Control	Marlborough District Council initiative. These pest plants are limited in their distribution but have the potential to severely affect either pastoral farming or cereal harvesting and/or environmental values in the district. Implementation of these programmes is delivered by the Marlborough District Council. The cost of control for these pest plants is shared between the Marlborough District Council (75%) and the land occupier (25%) where the infestation occurs.
Bathurst Bur		
Bur Daisy		
Saffron Thistle		
Giant Needlegrass		
Chinese Pennisetum		
Parrots Feather		
Boneseed	Total Control	Marlborough District Council/Department of Conservation joint initiative. These pest plants are limited in their distribution but have the potential to invade large areas of the district's indigenous forest, scrub or waterways. Implementation of these programmes is delivered by the Marlborough District Council/Department of Conservation. The cost of control for these pest plants is shared between the Department of Conservation and the Marlborough District Council.
Climbing Spindleberry		
Eel Grass		
Madeira Vine		
Moth Plant		
Spartina		
Evergreen Buckthorn		
Senegal Tea		
Cathedral Bells		

Plant Pest Species	Status	Comments
Nassella Tussock	Containment Control	Land occupiers are required to annually destroy all plants on their properties before they produce seed.
Chilean Needlegrass		Land occupiers are required to annually destroy plants on their properties before they produce seed.
White-Edged Nightshade		The degree of intervention required by land occupiers to manage these pest plants depends on the classification of each property. The control requirements range from the destruction of all plants on Fringe properties to a boundary control regime on Core properties.
Kangaroo Grass		
Broom and Gorse		
Ragwort		Land occupiers are required to progressively control broom in the Upper Awatere and broom and gorse in the Upper Wairau River catchments. All land occupiers are required to destroy all broom and gorse plants within 10 metres of their property boundary if the adjacent property is free of these pest plants.
Nodding Thistle		Land occupiers are required to destroy Ragwort plants within 50 metres of their property boundary if the adjacent property is free of this plant pest.
Contorta Pine		Land occupiers are required to destroy Nodding Thistle plants within 100 metres of their property boundary if the adjacent property is free of this plant pest.
Reed Sweet Grass		Land occupiers are required to destroy all plants with the exception of properties located directly adjacent to the Wye Reserve.
Blue Morning Glory	Surveillance	The Marlborough District Council is responsible for controlling this pest plant.
Climbing Asparagus		
Egeria		
Cotton Thistle		
Kahili Ginger and Yellow Ginger		
Lagarosiphon		
Purple Loosestrife		

2.3 Animal Pest Status

The table below summarises the district's animal pests and their designated status as classified in the Strategy.

Animal Pest	Status	Comments
Rook	Total Control	Successful Rook control has been carried out in Marlborough and ongoing surveillance to monitor any re-establishment continues. No rookeries have re-established since 2005. If Rooks were allowed to re-establish they are capable of causing significant damage to cereal crops and pasture. The Marlborough District Council will carry out any Rook control within its district with the aim of eradication.
Rabbits	Containment Control	High Rabbit populations affect soil and water quality, have a detrimental impact on economic production and increase the risk of soil erosion. It is the Marlborough District Council's responsibility to ensure land occupiers comply with their obligation to control Rabbits. The Marlborough District Council will continue to carry out Rabbit population trend monitoring and offer advice on control.
Possums		Possums cause extensive defoliation of native forest and predate on native fauna. At present in Marlborough there are no Possums on our offshore islands. A rule in the Strategy prohibits the release of Possums onto any offshore island in the Marlborough Sounds. Possums are vectors of bovine Tb and can cause large economic loss to the beef and dairy industry. Possums also cause extensive damage to young commercial forestry plants. Currently AHB undertake possum control.
Invasive Ants	Surveillance	Darwin Ants are in the Strategy as an invasive species that originates from Australia. Surveillance for these and other invasive ants will be carried out annually to determine their presence and/or distribution.

3. Total Control Pest Objectives and Performance Targets

Objective To eradicate Total Control pest plants from Marlborough.		
Performance Targets	Action Taken to Meet Target	Comments
3.1 100% of High Priority Total Control Pest sites are controlled annually by 30 June. ⁽¹⁾ 3.2 Carry out not less than 200 hours of surveillance and subsequent control for Total Control pest plant species annually by 30 June. ⁽¹⁾ 3.3 A measured decline to <5500 pest plants destroyed annually over all High Priority sites by 30 June. 3.4 Across all high priority sites for Parrots Feather, infestations require less than 50 litres of herbicide mix to manage. 3.5 Across all high priority sites for Eel Grass, less than 100 kilograms of material is removed as part of control operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan, implement and manage services required to carry out control operations. Carry out surveillance work for each of the 16 Total Control pest plants and undertake required control work. Record and maintain pest plant abundance and distribution data to enable trend monitoring over the duration of the Strategy. 	<p>The Total Control Pest programme ensures that species of low density and distribution are controlled annually with the objective of eradicating them from the region. Some species are now being managed under a prioritisation regime while they are being assessed for inclusion into the new generation Regional Pest Management Plan.</p> <p>Some components are carried out by Marlborough District Council staff with others carried out in partnership with the Department of Conservation.</p> <p>Surveillance in and around the existing infestations is very important to ensure the full extent is ranged each year. Carrying out surveillance in any other risk areas is also important to ensure no new infestations are establishing elsewhere.</p>

⁽¹⁾ Target that aligns directly with the Marlborough District Council 's Annual Plan targets.

Objective To ensure Rooks do not establish in Marlborough.		
Performance Targets	Action Taken to Meet Target	Comments
3.6 Annually monitor all sites that previously had rooks in residence with the last 10 years and investigate any sightings within 2 working days. 3.7 Undertake a public awareness campaign annually in Spring to facilitate sightings of Rooks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate historical sites where Rooks have congregated in the past. Actively seek public and land occupier reports of sightings of Rooks. 	There are no known rookeries or Rook populations established in Marlborough. The objective is to maintain this status by monitoring historical sites of activity and responding to reports/sightings.

4. Containment Control Pest Objectives and Performance Targets

Objective		
To prevent any increase in the distribution and density of pest plants and reduce infestation levels where possible.		
Performance Targets	Action Taken to Meet Target	Comments
<p>4.1 Annually prepare and distribute pest plant control programmes to land occupiers, as required, annually by the deadline set for the relevant containment pest species.</p> <p>4.2 Annually inspect a combined minimum of 70% of Nassella Tussock, Kangaroo Grass and White-edged Nightshade sites to confirm the issued control programme has been completed to standard. ⁽¹⁾</p> <p>4.3 An annual inspection is made with 100% of Chilean Needlegrass Fringe sites, with a landholder obligation for control, to inspect for compliance.</p> <p>4.4 Annual contact is made with 100% of Chilean Needlegrass Core sites to either inspect for compliance or undertake education/assistance activities.</p> <p>4.5 Undertake an annual surveillance, and carry out required control works, on 100% of Fringe Chilean Needlegrass sites where Council undertakes strategic management.</p> <p>4.6 Investigate any new reports of potential Chilean Needlegrass infestation within 2 working days.</p> <p>4.7 < 40 land occupiers issued with notices of direction due to non-compliance with Strategy rules within the 12 month period to 30 June.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually prepare control programmes for all land occupiers where an active infestation of a pest plant occurs. Prioritise sites with pest plants for inspection and carry out inspections to verify compliance. Ensure an annual inspection/visit is completed of all Chilean Needlegrass Fringe and Surveillance sites. Undertake compliance and education with Chilean Needlegrass Core sites to minimise spread risks. Carry out enforcement action where required to ensure that occupiers meet their obligations to control pest plants. Plan, implement and manage services required to carry out control operations. Prioritise pest plants and areas for surveillance. Any spread of pest plants to be recorded by GPS or field map notation and captured on the Marlborough District Council GIS for later mapping and area calculation. 	<p>The Containment Pest programme is by far the largest work component. Over 500 pre-emptive individual property programmes are issued to land occupiers in Marlborough. These programmes reiterate land occupier responsibilities to control containment pests on their land. The Marlborough District Council undertakes an inspection regime to ensure this occurs.</p> <p>A new initiative for Chilean Needlegrass will see the Marlborough District Council taking an assistance/education approach to assist landowners in achieving Chilean Needlegrass control on their property. The baseline Strategy rules will remain and be enforced if required.</p>

4.8	Annually undertake not less than 200 hours of Containment Control pest plant surveillance by 30 June. ⁽¹⁾	• Continue to progress the Reed Sweet Grass control programme on D'Urville Island as well as sites on the mainland.	The control of the Containment pests Reed Sweet Grass is carried out by the Marlborough District Council with the objective to contain it to Grovetown Lagoon. It has now got to a level where all Reed Sweet Grass infestation is being controlled including Grovetown Lagoon.
4.9	Carry out control operations across all high priority Reed Sweet Grass sites each year by 30 June.	• Plan and target specific areas of control where Pinus Contorta has spread from the containment area.	
4.10	Annually complete planned control operations for Pinus Contorta by 30 June.		

Objective

To minimise the impacts that feral rabbits have on pasture production, crops, forestry plantations and soil conservation values in Marlborough by maintaining feral pest rabbit populations at levels at or below the maximum allowable level (MAL) identified for the two sub-regions, the 'Upper Awatere/Clarence' and the 'Remainder of the area within the District'.

Performance Targets	Action Taken to Meet Target	Comments
<p>4.11 Annually create a schedule of 'high-risk' properties requiring inspection by 31 January each year.</p> <p>4.12 Undertake annual inspections on properties deemed high-risk by 30 June.</p> <p>4.13 Prepare and distribute a Notice of Direction to land occupiers where populations persist above the MAL for greater than 12 months from the problem being identified and advice provided.</p> <p>4.14 Less than 2 land occupiers are known to be in breach of the \leq MAL 4 Strategy rule as at 30 June each year.</p> <p>4.15 Less than 6 land occupiers are known to be in breach of the \leq MAL 3 Strategy rule as at 30 June each year.</p> <p>4.16 Annually undertake trend monitoring across the 14 established night count transects by 30 June.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify properties deemed 'at risk' of Rabbit population increase and implement an inspection regime. 'At-risk' properties include those in highly prone areas of Marlborough and those that have experienced recent population expansions. Where Rabbit infestations exist above the maximum allowable level, provide an adaptive management approach to ensure the land occupier can meet their responsibilities. If this fails, proceed to enforcement through the issuing of a Notice of Direction. Carry out the planned population trend monitors. 	<p>Feral rabbits are not managed in the same pre-emptive way as pest plants. It is a standing expectation that land occupiers maintain low populations.</p> <p>The Marlborough District Council inspection regime looks to assist land occupiers identify emerging problems early and provide advice on control plans. If the problem escalates and persists with no action taken by the land occupier, the Marlborough District Council can undertake enforcement action.</p> <p>In order to gain a sense of trends of Rabbit numbers, 13 night count transects have been established primarily in the highest Rabbit prone areas.</p>

Objective

To prevent the establishment of Possums on offshore islands in the Marlborough Sounds.

Performance Targets	Action Taken to Meet Target	Comments
4.17 Respond to reported sighting of Possums on offshore islands within five working days.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solicit public feedback on any Possums sighted on all offshore islands. • Report all sightings to the Department of Conservation who will undertake investigations with Marlborough District Council staff in support, if required. 	The objective is to maintain the Possum-free status of offshore islands in the Marlborough Sounds.

5. Surveillance – Pests

Objective

To monitor the distribution, the impacts and the spread of surveillance pests, fund appropriate research projects regarding surveillance pests and educate the public as to their identification and most appropriate method of control.

Performance Targets	Action Taken to Meet Target	Comments
<p>5.1 Undertake surveillance activities to evaluate pest distribution and impacts for invasive ant species and report findings by 30 June each year.</p> <p>5.2 Annually undertake not less than 100 hours of surveillance for pest spread, other than Total Control pest species, outside known sites and evaluate pest distribution and impacts. ⁽¹⁾</p> <p>5.3 Update records, within five working days of finding or being informed of any pest plant or pest animal, while carrying out surveillance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise contract services to assist in the undertaking of specific surveillance for invasive ants. • Inspect properties to determine pest status and distribution patterns. • Act on feedback from the public in relation to new pest infestations or instances of any unwanted organism or potential incursion of a harmful organism. • Record pest distribution on the Marlborough District Council's GIS database. 	<p>Two primary species of invasive ant occur in Marlborough – Darwin's Ant and Argentine Ant. An annual surveillance regime now targets Argentine Ant which has been found to be far more restricted in distribution than Darwin's Ant. In some instances, control activities are also taking place for Argentine Ant where resources allow and the infestation lends itself to a control attempt.</p> <p>Further information is also being gathered on pest plant species – primarily Purple Loosestrife and Cotton Thistle. These two species are shown to be very restricted in their distribution and are at levels where control activities are both feasible and cost effective. As a result they are being treated as Total Control until such time as the Strategy is reviewed.</p> <p>From time to time an unknown species (both plant and insects) is brought to the attention of Marlborough District Council staff through either public reporting or by surveillance activities. Once identified, it is recorded and information gathered. Very rarely is the species new to the region but, if so, it goes through an information building process to feed into any future decisions.</p>

6. Ecological Threats

Objective		
Encourage community initiatives and site led management programmes. Identify sites with significant ecological value where the reduction of a range of ecological pest threats would be effective in protecting those values. Provide information material and advice on impacts, threats and control options.		
Performance Targets	Action Taken to Meet Target	Comments
<p>6.1 Provide annual support to land occupiers where pest animal/plant issues have been identified as a threat to the integrity of a designated Significant Natural Area (SNA) on their property.</p> <p>6.2 To encourage community led pest management initiatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marlborough District Council has a voluntary land owner assistance programme applying to SNA sites, which includes pests/weed threat works. The Marlborough District Council is developing an active programme to support community led pest management initiatives. 	<p>While not managed directly by the Marlborough District Council Biosecurity Team, a range of pest management activities occur across SNA sites in Marlborough managed by the Environmental Scientist (Land Resources).</p> <p>These activities will be used to track progress of the management of ecological threats in high value sites. Staff are able to provide advice to landowners on all vertebrate pests – their issues and control options. Other support may also be initiated for community-led groups where time and resources allow.</p>

7. Educational Activities

Introduction

The Marlborough District Council recognises the advantages of a strong advisory and educational role in pest management and therefore takes a very active role in providing information and advice on the various impacts caused by pests and the best methods for controlling animal and pest plants.

Objective		
To educate the public in the identification of regional plant and animal pests and promote and encourage the most appropriate management and control options.		
Performance Targets	Action Taken to Meet Target	Comments
7.1 Annually review and, where necessary, publish/refresh pest fact sheets for pests listed in the Regional Pest Management Strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote a strong advisory and educational role to create a greater understanding of land occupier pest management roles and responsibilities. Facilitate and attend pest specific focus meetings. Attend and organise material for public events and/or field days. Liaise with the Marlborough District Council's website manager to coordinate website updates. 	On-going community education is a very important part of raising the awareness of biosecurity and pest management within the community.
7.2 Annually organise and attend at least one pest specific focus group meeting and at least one pest related field day.		Holding focus group meetings or field days can be very useful to engage directly to specific groups of people.
7.3 Each year, review the overall structure and scope of information on the Marlborough District Council's website and initiate updates by 30 June.		As more of the community moves to finding information online, appropriate and accurate information needs to be maintained on the Marlborough District Council website.

8. Biological Control Programme

Objective

To enhance the establishment of biological control agents for a range of pest plants, with the aim of achieving an environmentally acceptable and cost effective method of control.

Performance Targets	Action Taken to Meet Target	Comments
<p>8.1 Agree on annual biological control programme outcomes in conjunction with the Biological Control Collective Group by 31 July each year.</p> <p>8.2 If requested and if feasible, provide biological control agents which have established in the region, to occupiers on request, for the purpose of further distribution.</p> <p>8.3 Monitor and gather information on the establishment of all biological control agents (ex lab stock) released within the region within the previous 5 years by 30 June each year.</p> <p>8.4 Complete Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease (RHD) immunity level survey by 30 June each year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to the collective biological control programme managed by Landcare Research. Harvest and release biological control agents to enhance their distribution. Monitor the establishment and distribution of biological control agents released in region. Support initiatives to assess the impact on pest plants of biological control agents released in Marlborough. Undertake research into the status of the RHD virus in rabbit populations of Marlborough. 	<p>The Marlborough District Council will continue to support the National Biocontrol Collective which oversees the work programme required to develop new biological control agents for entrenched weed species within New Zealand.</p> <p>Within Marlborough, Marlborough District Council staff will endeavour to monitor releases of biological control agents and harvest/re-release agents where necessary.</p>

9. National Pest Plant Accord

Objective		
To prevent the sale, distribution or propagation within New Zealand of any plant pest listed in the National Plant Pest Accord.		
Performance Targets	Action Taken to Meet Target	Comments
9.1 Undertake a minimum of four casual plant outlet inspections annually by 30 June. 9.2 Inspect a single, selected commercial retail outlet each year by 30 June. 9.3 Respond to all complaints relating to the sale of National Pest Plant Accord listed plant species within 3 working days.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspect casual plant outlets for compliance as they are deemed high risk in terms of the propagation and distribution of National Pest Plant Accord species. As required, follow-up on commercial outlets that may have a history of non-compliance. Promote a strong advisory and educational role in association with the National Pest Plant Accord. Record and report inspection results to the Ministry for Primary Industry. Ensure all inspections are carried out by a warranted officer. 	<p>The Marlborough District Council, as a signatory to the National Pest Plant Accord, will continue to undertake compliance activities to ensure plant retailers or casual traders adhere to the principles of the National Pest Plant Accord.</p> <p>Marlborough District Council staff also endeavour to educate the general public at every opportunity regarding which plant species are banned from sale, propagation and display.</p> <p>All formal inspection information is entered and managed by a central Ministry for Primary Industry database.</p>

10. Research

Introduction

The Marlborough District Council understands the need for research in the field of pest management and provides funding for a number of research projects.

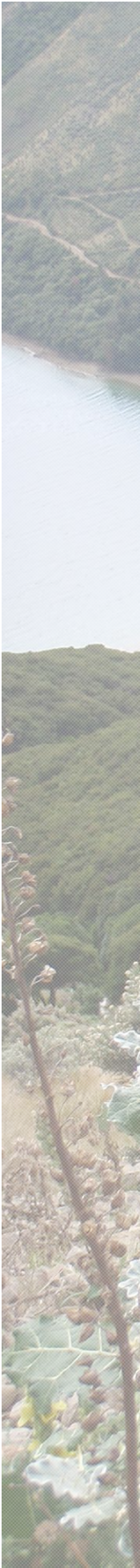
Objective

To support research programmes which benefit pest programmes in the Marlborough district.

Performance Targets	Action Taken to Meet Target	Comments
10.1 As opportunities arise, document, approve and report upon all research initiatives undertaken to or committed to support by 30 June each year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain approval to commit time or resource toward research activities or programmes. • Document all research activities. • Plan and undertake research trials in a planned and cost effective manner. 	The Marlborough District Council often commits to be involved in a number of national research projects that will benefit the Marlborough community. This can be either the development of new control tools, gaining a better understanding of current control tools, or simply 'banding together' on activities that are better coordinated at a national level.

11. Biosecurity Programmes - Other

Objective		
To facilitate partnerships with industry and the Crown in the management and coordination of national pest and unwanted organism programmes.		
Performance Targets	Action Taken to Meet Target	Comments
<p>11.1 Implement activities relating to the Freshwater Pest Partnership Programme by 30 June each year.</p> <p>11.2 Provide annual, on-going support to the implementation of the Top of the South Marine Biosecurity Strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Ministry for Primary Industry-led Freshwater Pest Partnership in conjunction with regional partners. • Attend committee and partnership meetings of the Top of the South Marine Biosecurity Partnership as well as provide financial support. • Ensure a capacity is maintained to support any new pest incursion into the region. 	<p>The Marlborough District Council will continue to support the Ministry for Primary Industry-led National Freshwater Pest Partnership programme. This focusses on advocacy, awareness and education with waterway users to minimise the spread of freshwater pests.</p> <p>The Top of the South Marine Biosecurity Partnership is now building capacity and is slowly gaining an understanding of the complexities of marine pests and pathways. By bringing all parties together, all are appreciating how each can play a role in minimising spread risk and reacting when a pest arrives in the Top of the South.</p>



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