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Unwanted pest detected in the harbour

• Last Updated 23 Sep 2022

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Last month during one of our routine dive surveys for invasive marine pests at Waitangi, the dive team discovered three fanworm attached to a boat hull.

These were later confirmed as Mediterranean fanworm, which are classed as an unwanted organism by MPI and definitely "new" to the Chathams.

The specimens were sent to the Marine Invasive Taxonomic Service (MITS) in Wellington to confirm their species and if they could reproduce. Fortunately, all three specimens were deemed immature and not reproductive.

Council and Environment Canterbury acted very promptly to minimise any residue risk from the vessel and engaged Diving Services Ltd out of Nelson to come over and treat the vessel on-site with the help of Robin and Nick. This involved "wrapping" the vessel and using a chlorine solution which was left to soak for 30 hours.

MPI has also been involved and has designed an ongoing survey plan for our dive team to carry out in the immediate area to make sure there are no other fanworms on the Island. MPI has provided some funding to help with this.

Once again, this incident demonstrates how quickly any unwanted organism (marine or terrestrial) can show up on the Island despite our best biosecurity work.

In other news, we are pleased to let everyone know that Jason Seymour has joined the team as a resident Biosecurity Officer on the Island (replacing Kerry Moir). He will be working alongside Robin. Jason has already had some training and has investigated unusual incoming freight issues and queries.

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Immature fanworm found at Waitangi

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Divers searching for other specimen

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