



Wilding Pines

What are wilding pines?

Wildings are the result of seedling spread of introduced trees (mainly conifers), occurring in areas not managed for forest production, especially in the hill and high country of New Zealand. Here they cause concern by threaten pastoral production or conservation values and disrupting highly valued visual landscapes.

Why are they a problem?

Wilding pines are a significant problem in some parts of the South Island, undermining its scenic qualities and threatening native flora and fauna. In some parts of the South Island wilding pines are overtaking native plants as the dominant species.

How will they be controlled?

Contractors are required to remove all seedlings and young trees from areas of known pine infestation. These will either be hand-pulled or felled using pruning saw/loppers.

Mature trees will be poisoned by injecting up to twelve holes into their trunks, and injecting an average of 2g of herbicide into each hole. The active ingredient will be metsulfuron-methyl, which is commercially available under brand names such as Meturon (Agpro) and Zeal® (DuPont).

What happens to poisoned trees?

Poisoned trees will be left standing. Initially each tree will turn brown and lose its needles, during which time it will be very obvious visually. Eventually, it will become a dead spar in the forest that will rot away, with its branches and stem slowly falling to the ground in pieces, over a period of up to 15 years for large trees.

Why are trees not being felled?

The felling of wilding pines has been tried in the past. However, it can make the wilding pine problem worse. Large trees break down a lot of regenerating native vegetation as they hit the ground, thereby opening up a 'light well' on the forest floor. Pine seeds like high light conditions to germinate, and dozens of seedlings can appear around the felled tree.

By contrast, poisoning leaves the surrounding regenerating native vegetation undisturbed, and allows a seamless transition from wilding pines to native vegetation. Significantly less secondary pine re-growth is anticipated from poisoning. It is widely recognized as the preferred means of managing wilding pines in forested areas.