

CAWS Student Travel Grant Report
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I was awarded the CAWS Student Travel Grant to support my travel to the New Zealand Plant Protection Society Conference in Napier, New Zealand. This conference took place from August 10th – 12th at the Napier Conference Centre, with about 150 delegates from around New Zealand.

This conference was a unique opportunity to connect with other researchers, scientists and students working in plant protection, especially those working in biosecurity. This included the AgResearch Weeds Community of Practice meeting, a breakout session where I was able to hear and present updates on current weed research projects and ideas for future projects. Additionally, I was able to network with other PhD students working in related fields to myself, some of whom I have stayed in contact with on social media. The conference dinner and happy hour events provided a more informal environment to chat with people I did not know and whom I otherwise would not have spoken to. Often times at conferences there is a tendency to only socialise with people you are already acquainted with or those you work with, so it can be important to engage with strangers (with the aid of wine).

While at the conference, I gave a talk on my most recent publication from PLoS One titled “Weed seed contamination in imported seed lots entering New Zealand” (<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0256623>). Speaking in front of 150 people is the largest audience I have presented for to date and I was quite pleased with the favorable feedback I received. Fortunately, NZPPS’ policy allowed me to present work I had previously published.

When the conference concluded, I took a few days to explore Hawke’s Bay with my partner, which included visiting wineries, op shops and Cape Kidnappers. Overall, this conference was a positive experience and I am thankful for CAWS for providing me with financial support.