

Identifying Pasture Pests

Several different pests can cause damage to pastures. Correct identification is essential to make control measures effective and economic.

Generally it is the number of insects or other invertebrates that make a pest. Many 'pests', including root feeders like grass grub, are beneficial in low numbers. It is vital that farmers know how to monitor numbers and pest damage.

Below is a table showing various Pasture Symptoms as with what could be a possible cause:

Season	Symptoms	Possible Cause
Autumn	Grass pulling Loss of clover (grass dominance) Loss of grasses (clover dominance) Plant death (grasses) Tiller death in grasses Bare patches in grass without castings Clover leaves going white Poor persistence of clover	Grass grub Grass grub Black beetle Black beetle Argentine stem weevil Porina Black field cricket Clover flea
Winter	Grass pulling Loss of clover (grass dominance) Clover leaves going white Poor persistence of clover	Grass grub Grass grub Porina Clover flea
Spring	Loss of grasses (clover dominance) Plant death (grasses) Tiller death in grasses Feeding damage on clover Loss of undersown species	Grass grub Black beetle Argentine stem weevil Slug Slug
Summer	Bare patches in grass without castings Clover leaves wilting	Black field cricket Aphid



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Aphids

(many species)

Aphids are pests of brassica, lucerne and cereal crops throughout NZ, but occur more frequently in the South Island. They cause damage to plants by sucking plant juices and are also a vector for a number of plant viruses.



Argentine stem weevil

(*Listronotus bonariensis*)

Argentine stem weevil (ASW) is a pest of short-term ryegrass and perennial ryegrass *Without* endophyte throughout NZ.



Black beetle

(*Heteronychus arator*)

Black beetle (BB) is a pest in the upper North Island, on light, free draining soils. Numbers vary widely from year to year, with root feeding larvae capable of severe summer pasture damage, and adults able to significantly damage establishing grass in autumn.



Black field cricket

(*Teleogryllus commodus*)

Black field cricket is a serious pasture pest in Northland, Auckland, parts of the Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Hawkes Bay and Manawatu. It especially likes clay soils prone to cracking in dry summers.



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Clover flea

(*Sminthurus viridis*)

Clover flea (CF) is present throughout NZ and is a particular threat to white clover and lucerne. Severe damage has been reported in parts of Northland, South Auckland, Waikato and the Bay of Plenty.



Diamondback moth

(*Plutella xylostella*)

Diamondback moth (DM) occurs throughout NZ, on brassica crops often in association with white butterfly.



Grass grub

(*Costelytra zealandica*)

Grass grubs (GG) are found throughout NZ. The larvae graze the roots of grass and clover causing poor growth and plant death, mainly from March-July. With severe damage, turf can be rolled back like carpet.



Greasy cutworm

(*Agrotis ipsilon aneituma*)

Greasy cutworm (GC) is found in open areas below the snowline throughout NZ. Although generally considered a minor pest, it can be a serious problem in some field crops.



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Nysius

(*Wheat bug*)

Nysius huttoni (also known as wheat bug) is found throughout NZ, particularly in the drier Central, North Otago and East Coast regions. It causes damage to emerging brassica crops by feeding on the young stems.



Porina

(*Wiseana* sp.)

Porina are found throughout NZ and attack most pasture species including ryegrass and white clover.



Slugs

(*Deroceras* sp.)

Slugs are present throughout NZ and can rapidly cause severe seedling loss in establishing pasture and crops. Take particular care with spraydrill or direct-drilling where surface trash is present.



Springtails

(*Bourletiella* sp.)

There are several species of springtails, the only one causing damage to brassicas being the garden springtail (*Bourletiella hortensis*). They are found throughout NZ, with little known about their lifecycle.



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White butterfly

(*Pieris rapae*)

White butterfly (WB) is found throughout NZ. The caterpillar causes damage by feeding on the leaves of brassica crops.



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