

Black Field Cricket



Introduction

The black field cricket (*Teleogryllus commodus*) is a serious pasture pest in regions such as Northland, Auckland, parts of the Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Hawkes Bay and Manawatu. Black field crickets like clay soils which are prone to cracking in dry summers. It is the late nymphal stages and adults that cause the most pasture damage.

Description

An adult cricket can grow to 2.5 cm long. The body and wings are a chestnut-brown in colour. The head is large and black and bears a pair of very long antennae. The wings when folded back form a point which extends beyond the body. The eggs are white, sausage-shaped, and about 0.3 cm long. They are laid singly, but loosely clustered, about 1 cm deep in damp soil. A distinctive white band around their middle distinguishes the nymphs of this cricket from those of any other found in New Zealand.

Life cycle

Eggs are laid from February through to May. The eggs overwinter and hatch in spring. The nymphs grow rapidly, passing through about 12 instar stages to become adults. One female can lay 500 to 1500 eggs over 2 to 3 months. The adult black field cricket is found from February to May.

Damage

Black field crickets damage pastures through attacking the growing crowns of grasses and in dry periods this often kills the plants which leaves the soil open to weed invasion. Later in the season seedlings, whether self-sown or in reseeded pasture, may also be destroyed. Crickets are selective feeders, preferring grasses but also eat legumes, weeds and seed. Pastures are more susceptible to damage in their first year.

Management and Control

Crickets can be controlled effectively using insecticides such as, Malathion 50 EC and Yates Madison 50 in combination with a bran or wheat bait. Crickets will cannibalise dead crickets which may increase the uptake of insecticide from the dead insect. Poisoning in early summer when cricket populations are low can prevent more eggs being laid.

The threshold level recommended for taking action against black field cricket is 5-10/m². The recommended sampling time is early summer when nymphs are present.

For more information contact Cropmark Seeds Ltd
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