

Pests to be aware of in autumn

Insect pests can affect your pasture and crop yield, and your budget. By carefully monitoring the pests on your farm and tracking the conditions that might allow them to thrive, you could reduce their impact on your yield.

In the coming seasons, your farm could encounter:

- Redlegged earth mite (RLEM)
- Lucerne flea
- African black beetle (ABB)
- Slugs and snails

Monitoring and managing these pests is crucial in autumn. They vary in shape, size and type of damage they cause to pastures. For more detail on each pest, please see the relevant Dairy Australia fact sheet.

KEY MESSAGES

Effective pest management requires action at the right time of the year

Familiarise yourself with pests that might damage your pasture

Monitor your pasture closely

Use the right control method for the right pest



Lucerne flea. Image: Drägüs



Redlegged earth mite. Image: Cesar



African black beetle (ABB) larva.
Image: Mijail Karpyn Esqueda



Black keeled slug. Source: Cesar



Small pointed snail. Source: Cesar



African black beetle (ABB) adult
Image: Mijail Karpyn Esqueda

Post		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
RLEM					🔍	🔍	🔍						
ABB	larva	🔍	🔍	🔍									
	adult				🔍	🔍					🔍	🔍	
Slugs and snails		🔍	🔍	🔍	🔍	🔍							
Lucerne flea					🔍	🔍	🔍	🔍					🔍

🔍 Monitor ■ Critical Management

Identifying pests

The first step to managing pests is to correctly identify them. RLEM is often confused with other mites (such as blue oat mite) and ABB is often confused with other pasture cockchafers (such as blackheaded cockchafer, redheaded cockchafer and yellow headed cockchafer). Incorrectly identifying pests can result in damage to plants, wasted pesticides, and the loss of beneficial insects.

Signs to look for

RLEM are often found on the leaf surface in feeding aggregations of up to 30. Other mite species often feed individually. They cause silvering or white discolouration of leaves.

ABB differs from other common pasture cockchafer because both larvae and adults cause damage to plants. Larvae prune the roots while adults feed on stems below or just above the soil surface. Damage is patchy and affected pasture can be rolled back like a carpet.

Slugs and snails leave feed with damage such as shredded edges, irregular shaped holes in leaves, removal of plant parts and/or entire seedlings. Fresh trails of white and clear slime (mucus) visible in the morning can also be a sign of slugs and snails.

Lucerne flea is distinctively patchy in distribution. They can 'spring-off' vegetation when disturbed. They leave distinctive 'windows' through leaves. Patches of intense feeding can move around paddocks. These can be obvious targets for spot spraying.

Management tips

General management strategies can be put in place to decrease pest populations on your farm. For more detail on managing each pest, please see the relevant Dairy Australia fact sheets.

Weed management reduces the potential habitat for lingering pests. Areas surrounding your pasture can be a source of pests. Treat by removing grasses and weeds from headlands. Grazing management reduces the potential habitat for lingering pests and causes physical damage to pests through trampling. If done at the right time of the year, it can decrease pest population to acceptable levels.

Grazing in summer reduces refuge for slugs and snails and dries them out. Heavy grazing in spring reduces the carry over populations of RLEM.

Rotating crops: Planting crops that are unfavourable to the pest helps to break the life cycle of insects that develop under specific conditions. For example, planting a legume, chicory or brassica species in spring affects ABB larvae. In addition, ploughing may expose insects to unfavourable environmental conditions.

Control sprays help reduce pest population to manageable levels if used at the right time. These sprays require high levels of monitoring of the pest life stage to be effective. An example is to use Timerite® to obtain the optimum spring spray dates for RLEM for different regions. It is important to rotate chemicals to avoid developing resistance.

Endophytes help boost pasture persistence against insect pests. Different endophytes are more effective against some pest than others. Always seek professional advice to ensure the correct choice is made for your farm.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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