

Black Field Cricket (*Teleogryllus commodus*)

Introduction

There are two main crickets in New Zealand – the black field cricket and the smaller native cricket.

The Black field cricket is a serious pasture pest in Northland, Auckland, parts of Taranaki, Bay of Plenty, Hawke's Bay and the Waikato.

Late nymphal stage and adult crickets cause the most pasture damage and are distinguished from the native cricket by the white band across their body.

The adult black cricket can be found from February to May in pastures.

Crickets feed above ground, predominately at night and live in cracks in the soil during the day. Damage is more apparent in clay soils prone to cracking in dry summers. Crickets feed outwards from the cracks that they live in, eating all plant matter in the pasture. New pastures are particularly susceptible to damage. They can kill older grass pastures as well, with high grazing pressure on the crown. The timing of damage generally starts in late December and is evident by bare soil patches, or when the surface pasture is moved crickets may be seen feeding.



Mature Male



Mature Female

Cricket Lifecycle

The black field cricket produces only one generation a year, but the life stages considerably overlap. One adult female can lay 500 to 1500 eggs over 2 to 3 months; 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. The late nymphal stage and adults cause the most pasture damage.

Testing for Crickets

The way to test for crickets is to mix up a weak solution of household detergent in a water can then flush it down the cracks in the soil. If present crickets will come out from the cracks

Management and Control

Populations greater than 5 -10/m² are economical to treat, at 40/m² crickets can consume up to 30 kg DM/ha/day. Populations can reach 100 to 150+/m².

Poisoning is recommended in early summer when cricket numbers are low to prevent more eggs being laid. Crickets can be effectively controlled by using grain bait that is produced for the market. If treated early, crickets will cannibalise dead crickets, increasing the uptake of the chemical which remains active in the dead.

Packaging and Application Rate

Cricket grain bait comes in a 22 kg bag and is available through your local seed retailer.

Recommended sowing rate: 11 kg/ha.