

Pasture Pests:

Greasy Cutworm (*Agrotis ipsilon*)

Information Sheet

Identification.

Greasy Cut Worm (GCW) adult moths are nocturnal and remain in the vegetation during the day.

Greasy Cut Worm moths are brown to grey in colour and peak flights occur between October and April.

Greasy Cut Worm caterpillars range in colour from light green to dark brown and black. They have two yellow and dotted stripes running down their backs. When fully grown they can be 50 mm long.



Greasy Cut Worm are in the main night feeders and spend the day curled up in burrows below the soil surface and are greasy in appearance.

Distribution and Damage.

GCW are found throughout New Zealand and generally not considered a significant pest until when given the right conditions numbers can reach epidemic proportions and cause severe damage. These epidemic outbursts will normally occur during the months October to April.

Crops attacked include pasture, brassica cereals and maize. Smaller caterpillars feed and live among leaves while the larger caterpillars live in burrows and usually sever the plant stem at its base (see photo). Cultivated and minimal tillage paddocks will be at less risk of damage while direct drilled paddocks are a higher risk.

Lifecycle.

Greasy Cut Worm live over winter in the soil as pupae with growth and development occurring once the ground temperature is $>10^{\circ}$ Celsius. Once they have emerged from the ground female moths mate and lay between 600 to 800 eggs either on the leaves or in cracks in the ground. These then hatch within 3-5 days.

Depending on climate there can be up to three generations in warmer parts of New Zealand and two generations in the cooler areas.

For more information or to discuss how to protect your pasture against Greasy Cut Worm please contact Specialty Seeds



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