

# Pasture Pests:

## Porina (*Wiseana* sp)

### Information Sheet

#### Identification.

There are seven Porina species which are difficult to tell apart from one or another however it is common to find as many of four separate species of Porina in the same location.

Caterpillars are grey - yellow with a dark brown head, and can grow up to between 4 -30mm in length. They live in tunnels in the soil; these tunnels are associated with bare patches of pasture. Tunnel entrances can be found as holes, covered in soil castings and debris held together with silken threads, when picked up will stick together unlike worm castings that crumble on touch.

The moths which fly in large numbers during the spring and early summer months are brown with white and black markings on the forewing. As these moths do not feed and will not survive more than a few days it's the caterpillars' that do the damage to your pasture.



#### Distribution and damage.

Porina are found in most regions of New Zealand, however they are normally not as big a problem in Northern half of the North Island.

If you have witnessed large flights in the spring we suggest you check your pastures (down to 30 cm) during mid January to assess caterpillar numbers. Early treatment is the key to minimising pasture damage and if small caterpillars are discovered during this search it would fair to assume the damage will increase not decrease.

At 2 caterpillars per sq spade you could expect pasture dry matter production to drop by 1500 kg/DM/hectare. The caterpillars are reluctant to move far from the burrows where most of the initial damage occurs. However as this food source gets less they will move further from their burrows.

Porina caterpillars can damage pasture at any time however the most damage occurs 2-4 years after establishment. Paddocks that have been used to make Hay/ Silage in the spring are at most risk from Porina damage as these paddocks provide the perfect environment for the moth and the eggs they lay to survive.

#### Life Cycle.

As mentioned the Porina moths fly in large numbers during mid spring to early summer.



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The female can lay up 3,000 eggs which after 10-21 days hatch into small caterpillars that live on the surface of the ground under a silk blanket. As the caterpillars develop they burrow into silk lined burrows in the ground.

During the twelve months the caterpillars take to develop into adults they will pass through 8-9 instars shedding their old skin at each moult.

*For more information or to discuss how to protect your pasture against Porina please contact Specialty Seeds*



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