

Porina



Introduction

Porina are found throughout New Zealand and attack most pasture species including ryegrass and white clover. Porina is the name given to several species of moth:

- *Wiseana cervinata*
- *Wiseana umbraculata*
- *Wiseana signata*
- Also *Wiseana despecta* which is a synonym for *Wiseana cervinata*.

W. signata is generally found from Nelson and coastal Marlborough northwards, while *W. umbraculata* larvae live in boggy sites. Both these species as adults can be distinguished from *W. cervinata* by their pallid fawn antennae. *Wiseana cervinata* is the most prevalent. It is important to know which species is present as flight periods, subsequent larval populations and damage can differ in their timing.

Description

Porina eggs are small, oval and creamy white initially but turn black within a few hours of being laid. Adult porina are a pale brownish-black to dull yellowish-brown colour, with a wing span of 30-40 mm. The larvae have greyish-yellow bodies with dark brown heads and grow up to 70 mm. They live in burrows and emerge at night to feed. Their tunnels are associated with bare patches of pasture, and dead plants. Tunnel entrances can be found as holes, covered in soil castings and debris held together with silken threads, which are quite different from worm casts.

Life cycle

Porina moths fly in spring and do not feed. Female moths scatter up to 3000 eggs as they crawl or fly over pasture. The eggs hatch in about a month, and 4 to 6 weeks later the 10-15 mm long caterpillars build permanent silk lined burrows in the soil. Caterpillars pupate in the burrows in late winter early spring. There is normally one generation per year.

Damage

Porina caterpillars damage pastures in late autumn and throughout winter as growth slows. The damage is caused by the larvae feeding on the aerial parts of plants, eating off the foliage at ground level. In pasture, *W. cervinata* may produce open patches in the sward and permanent changes in species composition. The effect of *W. signata* and *W. umbraculata* on pasture production is not known.

Management

Porina can be relatively easily controlled using insecticides such as insect growth regulators which should be applied late January through to early March or organophosphate and synthetic pyrethroids can be used later.

Mob stocking in summer can give effective porina control, and pastures that have been cropped and cultivated are generally free of porina damage for the first couple of years after sowing.

20-40 caterpillars per m² (sampled in late summer / early autumn) is the general threshold for taking action, although lower levels are recommended in new pastures, in pastures growing poorly and during dry autumns.

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