



## NZ Forage Systems Fact Sheet

# Pests of Plantain - Slugs

### Key Points

1. New sowings are particularly susceptible as little else may be available for slugs to feed on.
2. All new sowings should be checked every three days to monitor the number and health of seedlings.
3. Damage from slugs can be widespread and occur rapidly.
4. Slugs are easily controlled with baits at sowing.

### Slugs *Deroceras reticulatum*

- Slug damage is usually in the centre of the leaves whereas plantain moth caterpillar damage is to the edge or margins of the leaf.
- Slugs live for over a year and reproduce in all seasons meaning eggs, juveniles and adults can all be present at one time.
- Slug numbers are highest in spring, decline over summer and begin to rise again after autumn rains.
- Warm, moist conditions are ideal for slugs and highest numbers are found on heavier, wetter soils and in summer-wet districts.
- Slugs are most active at night, retreating to the bottom of plants or into the soil during daytime.
- Slugs will attack establishing plantain seedlings and can quickly become widespread and lead to the death of many seedlings.
- If new leaves on plantain plants are being damaged, slug control is probably necessary.
- Slug populations can be monitored by checking individual plants and searching the soil beneath plants for slug eggs. Placing moist sacks or boards on the ground overnight can be used in new sowings to check for slugs.
- Slugs are readily controlled using baits.
- There are many chemical bait products to control slugs, including metaldehyde, methiocarb and iron chelate. Effective control on established plants requires accurate spreading of baits (at manufacturers recommendations) as slugs do not travel far in search of food.
- Cultivation kills most slugs but direct drilled sowings should be monitored closely.
- Baits can be drilled at sowing with seed or broadcast soon after sowing.
- Because baits are dry they must absorb moisture (from soil, dew or light rain) to make them palatable and attractive to slugs.



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## Months when slugs are likely to be a problem

Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Newly sown												
Established plants												

## Control options

Active ingredient	Trade name	Label recommendation for pasture	Withholding period	Notes
Metaldehyde	Metarex, SlugOut,	Yes	Yes	Metarex includes a bird repell-
Methiocarb	Mesuroil	No	No	Not recommended for pasture.
Iron chelate	Quash	No	No	Not recommended for pasture.

## Slug damage



Slug damaged plant



Typical slug damage on plantain leaf



An opened up plant reveals 4 slugs at the base of the plant



Slug eggs on soil - each is less than 2mm in diameter