

# Argentine stem weevil (*Listronotus bonariensis*)

## Introduction

Argentine stem weevil (ASW) is a pest of short-term ryegrass and perennial ryegrass *Without* endophyte throughout NZ.

## Identification

ASW larvae destroy ryegrass tillers by boring into the base of their stems. Populations can reach 500-1000 larvae/m<sup>2</sup>, causing significant pasture damage.

To find larvae, look for dead or dying central leaves in tillers, that when lightly pulled come straight out of the plant - due to being eaten at the base of the stem. The base of these stems show a small hole (if larvae is still inside) or significant damage inside as in the photo.

Larval damage is usually seen when pastures are growing slowly, and is often confused with drought stress. Younger pastures seem to be more susceptible than older ones.

Adult weevil feeding is characterised by small rectangular 'windows' 2-3 mm long on the leaf blade. Adults do not affect the persistence of established pasture, but may reduce establishment of summer sown ryegrass.

In most areas, ASW have two generations a year, one in spring and another in summer. Generally the summer generation is the most damaging, between January and March.



Most damage is from larvae (on ruler in mm graduations) boring into ryegrass stems.



Adult weevil grow up to 3 mm long.

## Prevention and management

### Perennial and long rotation ryegrass

Using a ryegrass containing endophyte will provide adequate ASW resistance in most situations. All endophytes, including *Plus AR1*, give good resistance. If sowing into high ASW numbers we also recommend using a suitable insecticide seed coating, such as *Agricote Grass*.

### Short-term ryegrass

Use of a suitable insecticide seed coating is recommended when sowing into high stem weevil numbers. Take care in warmer months (late spring-early autumn) when stem weevils are at high number.

A parasitoid wasp (*Microtonus hyperdae*) is now widespread, and helps alleviate damage caused by ASW.