

Pasture mealy bug (*Balanococcus poae*)

Introduction

Pasture mealy bug (PMB) can be a serious pasture pest in Canterbury areas, and is known to occur in the Manawatu and Nelson.

Identification

Adult mealy bugs are small, growing to about 2 mm in size, pink in colour. They are egg shaped with no easily discernible head or legs.

The best way to identify PMB is to dig up some ryegrass plants in autumn, and pull them apart to look for white, waxy secretions in the plant crown and upper roots. These will appear as cotton-wool-like globules.

Outbreaks of PMB are common in *Without* endophyte pastures in Canterbury.

Damage becomes apparent in autumn during extended dry periods. Symptoms of infestation resemble those of drought, with pastures browning off.

PMB damage tends to affect a whole paddock, rather than isolated patches. It causes widespread ryegrass death, leading to poor pasture persistence.

Prevention and management

All endophytes are believed to give a high level of resistance to PMB.



Evidence of PMB is seen as white waxy spots in the base of ryegrass plants.



AR1 endophyte (right) has good PMB resistance versus ryegrass Without endophyte (AgR Lincoln trial).