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Info 25: GRASS GRUB CONTROL

The grass grub (*Costelytra Zealandica*) is considered to be one of New Zealand's major pests. Eggs are laid in clusters in the soils during summer, normally hatching approximately two weeks later. The larvae then feed on roots until spring. In the spring, the mature larvae burrow further down into the soil, and construct cells in which they pupate. In October, when the adults emerge from the pupae, massed sightings of buzzing, low-flying nocturnal beetles often occur on still warm nights. Later congregating in huge numbers, they feed on fruits and shrubs (especially the Pin Oak and Lime tree), which are often severely defoliated as a result. This may go on throughout February, although November/December will be the heaviest attack time.

Control Hints to try:

* To control grass grub larvae, apply granular insecticides or spray insecticides to turf in late autumn.

* To control adult beetles, the best protection is to use a spray with an odour (ie Liquid Seaweed or a Eucalyptus oil-based spray). When applied over the newer foliage, they will act as a deterrent. Due to the plant being in active growth at this time of year, repeat applications will be required. A systematic insecticide could be used (ie Confidor), but the beetle would still need to eat enough of the leaf to ingest the chemical (ie apply at 11pm or 12pm at night, when the beetle is active and feeding!)

* In gardens, cultivate the soil in early spring to kill pupating larvae. Flocks of starlings may reduce the numbers of grass grub larvae in turf. Naturally-ocurring bacterial diseases infect and kill grass grub larvae. Protozoans and nematodes have been found infecting grass grub larvae too, as has the tachinid fly parasite *Proscisso cana*. and one bacterial pathogen, *Serratia entomophil*, if formulated as a pesticide. This must be applied with soil-drilling equipment for best results. Using this biological pesticide may avoid the need for toxic pesticides and reduce the risk of soil contamination.

Black Cherry Aphid is also a problem at this time of year on the fruiting and flowering cherries. You will know them by the soft new growth being distorted by a large group of black 'sandfly-like' insects. If the tree is small, cut the infected new growth off. If it is large without fruit, use a systemic spray such as Confidor. If the tree has fruit on it, use Pyrethum oil or cut the infected growth off.

Please note: The above are suggestions only, and Southern Woods takes no responsibility for the sucess-rate of these remedies. They depend on climate, application directions being followed correctly and the seriousness of the problem.