Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Protect Grow Innovate

PestFacts WA

Issue: 4
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Native budworm caterpillars damaging canola seedlings. Photo courtesy of Holly Mackie (Farmanco).

Native budworm caterpillars are usually a spring pest of canola, however, earlier this month, Holly Mackie (Farmanco) reported finding damaging numbers of native budworm caterpillars shredding canola seedlings at Cranbrook. Approximately 1-2 caterpillars were

found per meter on canola seedlings at the 4 true leaves growth stage. She also found native budworm caterpillars stripping vetch leaves at Wansbrough.

Native budworm caterpillar feeding on a canola leaf. Photo courtesy of Holly Mackie (Farmanco).

Senior Research Scientist Dusty Severtson (DPIRD) suggests that, based on the size of the caterpillars, eggs were laid 2 or more weeks ago by a local population of native budworm moths that opportunistically found an early sown crop. The larger caterpillars found on the seedlings at Cranbrook are nearing pupation and will soon cease feeding. Typically, as cooler weather occurs, feeding damage from smaller caterpillars decreases.

However, the warmer than average temperatures expected this month and into winter, will provide favourable conditions for pest moths, and we may see more caterpillar damage in crops.

If high numbers of small and medium sized grubs are found in weedy paddocks or early sown lupin, canola and pulse crops, an insecticide application may be required.

Management

Detailed information on this pest can be found at the department's Native budworm fact sheet.

Insecticide options for the control of native budworm can be found in DPIRD's 2024 Winter Spring Insecticide Guide.

Native budworm monitoring

The only other reports of unseasonal native budworm caterpillar damage received by the PestFacts WA team were from April 1999. Native budworm moths usually migrate into agricultural regions in late winter and spring, although in some years, as experienced in 2024, the moths arrive early, and caterpillars can cause severe damage to young crops.

At the end of July/beginning of August volunteer farmers, agronomists and some DPIRD staff will commence weekly pheromone trapping for native budworm moths. This trapping is part of a program to monitor the potential risk of native budworm caterpillars to pulse and canola crops.

For more information refer to DPIRD's Native budworm moth trapping in Western Australia page.

Do you want to host a native budworm trap this season?

Farmers or consultants who would like to have a trap on their property this season can contact Research Scientists Rebecca Severtson in Northam on +61 8 96902131 or Andrew Phillips in Geraldton on +61 8 9956 8567.

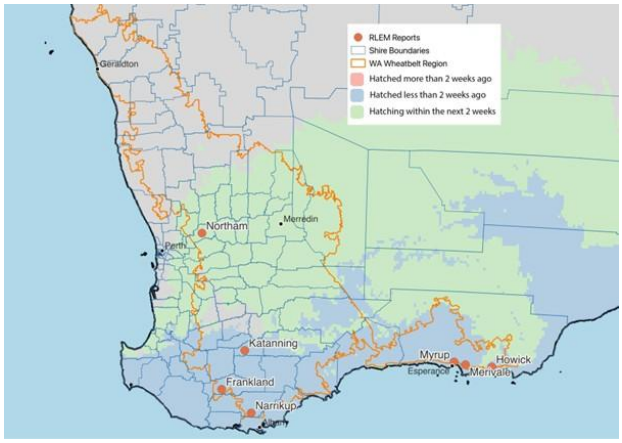
Further information

For more information contact Research Scientists Svetlana Micic in Albany on +61 8 9892 8591 or Andrew Phillips in Geraldton on +61 8 9956 8567

Article author: Bec Severtson (DPIRD Northam).

Redlegged earth mites are hatching

- Northam
- Katanning
- Frankland
- Narrikup
- Gibson
- Myrup
- Merivale
- Howick

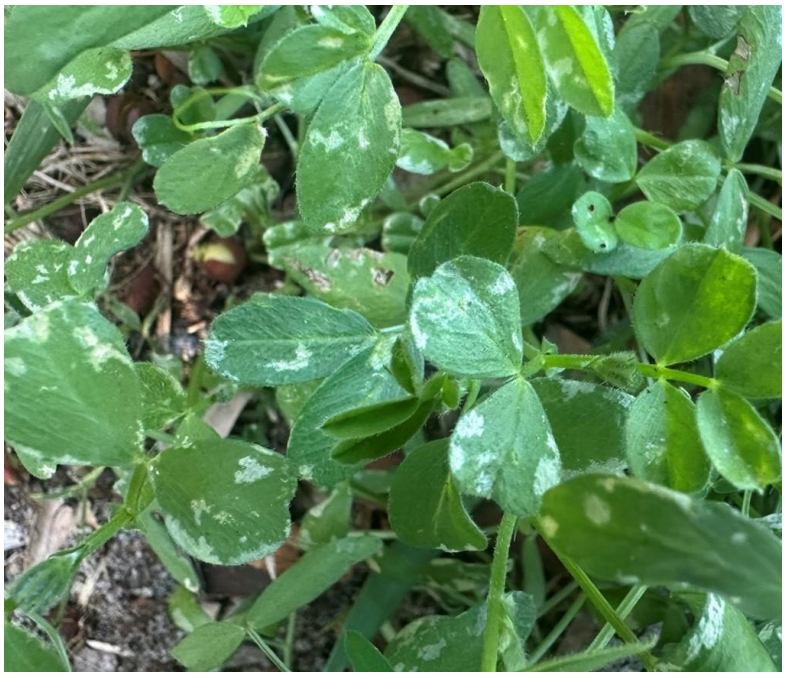


Redlegged earth mite (RLEM) predicted egg hatch status for WA, current to 5 May 2025. Grey area indicates no RLEM hatching predicted in the next 2 weeks. Map courtesy of Cesar Australia's RLEM hatch tool and DPIRD.

Redlegged earth mites (RLEM) are forecast to hatch from summer diapause eggs within the next 2 weeks of May in the central agricultural region according to Cesar Australia's online RLEM egg hatch calculator. Growers are urged to monitor for RLEM activity in their paddocks and be wary of insecticide resistant populations.

The PestFacts WA team has received reports of widespread RLEM hatching in the southern coastal region from late April, corresponding with Cesar Australia's predicted egg hatch dates. In the Katanning region, hatching was reported in mid-April, two weeks ahead of the predicted hatch date, although within the historical average.

Most reports of seedling canola crop damage in the Esperance and Frankland regions were from immature RLEM, indicating that there has not been a second generation.



Silvering of vetch leaves from redlegged earth mite feeding. Photo courtesy of DPIRD.

Damage to pasture has only been reported in the Esperance region, with clovers, at growth stages cotyledon to 5-6 trifoliate and vetch damaged by immature RLEM.

Remote monitoring of RLEM hatch dates

Hatching has not yet been detected at Beverley, Clackline or Northam in DPIRD's remotely monitored pitfall traps, which have been installed in paddocks with known RLEM pest populations. To read more about these traps see 2024 PestFacts WA Issue 3 article Using pitfall traps to detect pests.

Management of RLEM

Growers and consultants are urged to follow the updated management strategies outlined in GRDC's Redlegged earth mite best management practice guide.

Before spraying RLEM, consider whether the crop is outgrowing the feeding damage. In many years, and under good growing conditions, mites emerge from eggs during or after crop germination, and plants can outgrow mite feeding damage. However, moisture stressed crops are more vulnerable to mite damage.

The warmer than average temperatures predicted for May won't cause mortality in RLEM that have already emerged from summer diapause eggs.

Pre-sowing applications of insecticides are unlikely to protect germinating crops from mites hatching post sowing, and a post-emergent spray is often required.

To find registered insecticide recommendations for mites, refer to DPIRD's 2025 autumn winter insecticide guide. Diafenthiuron 500g/L was recently approved under Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) permit PER95087 for the control of RLEM in cereal crops.

RLEM resistance testing in 2025

Resistant RLEM populations are likely to be present in paddocks that have a history of repeated insecticide applications from the same mode of action group.

DPIRD, with co-investment from GRDC, will be undertaking RLEM resistance testing this year. If you notice RLEM surviving applications of insecticides, please contact DPIRD Research Scientist Svetlana Micic to discuss and arrange for paddocks to be tested.

To read more about insecticide resistance see GRDC's March-April 2025 Groundcover Issue 175 article Extreme weather challenges RLEM management and DPIRD's Prevent redlegged earth mite resistance page.

You can also listen to the DPIRD Grains Convo podcast Why aren't your insecticides working on redlegged earth mite?

Correct pest identification is important

RLEM and lucerne flea have different environmental requirements for hatching from over-summering (i.e. diapause) eggs. This can lead to different hatching times. This differenceis important when considering timing, period of efficacy, and choice of insecticide application.

Correct identification of mites is also critical for effective control, as different species can vary in their susceptibility to certain insecticide groups, either naturally or through insecticide resistance. RLEM can co-exist with and look similar to blue oat mites. Other common mites are bryobia (clover) mite and balaustium mite, but resistance to insecticides has only been found in RLEM.

Redlegged earth mites on canola. Photo courtesy of DPIRD.

For more information on identification of mites refer to GRDC's Redlegged earth mite best management practice guide.

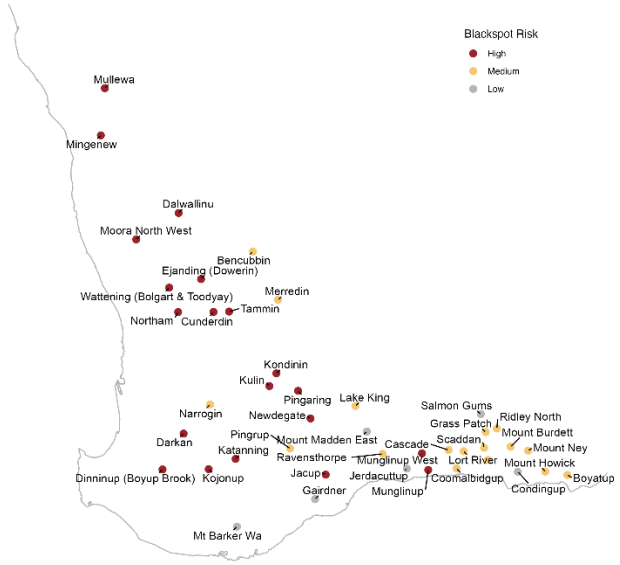
You can request or confirm identification of mites by using the PestFacts WA Reporter app. Your reports will also contribute to the interactive PestFacts WA service which issue warnings of pest outbreaks.

Further information

For more mite information contact Research Scientist Svetlana Micic in Albany on +61 8 9892 8591.

Article author: Bec Severtson (DPIRD Northam) and Svetlana Micic (DPIRD Albany).

Field pea blackspot disease forecasts for WA are available online



Map showing the relative current risk of spores based upon blackspot model outputs for various locations in WA, 4 May 2025. Map generated by DPIRD's Blackspot Manager model.

DPIRD's blackspot in field pea disease forecasts for the Western Australian 2025 season can now be viewed online. The latest forecast is current to 5 May 2025, and DPIRD's Blackspot Manager model has used weather data from 1 January to 4 May 2025 from the nearest weather station.

Blackspot Manager is a model that predicts the maturity and release of spores that cause blackspot in field pea, using weather data from the nearest weather station. Advice is given on when it is safe to sow field pea.

Field pea with blackspot. Photo courtesy of DPIRD.

Blackspot in field pea is caused by fungal spores produced on old stubble, which are carried by wind into new crops following rain events. Infection may occur at any stage of

plant growth. The most effective way to manage blackspot in field pea is to delay sowing until a significant number of spores have been released off the stubble.

DPIRD recommends not sowing field pea in WA before 10 May and to avoid dry sowing field pea. At present, blackspot risk is low enough at Condingup, Jerdacuttup, Mount Madden East and Salmon Gums to allow sowing any time after 10 May. Although blackspot risk is also low at Gairdner and Mount Barker, sowing of field pea is not recommended at these locations until later in May.

Dry summer and autumn conditions across parts of the grainbelt have slowed blackspot spore maturation, leaving some areas at high blackspot risk. These locations will require several rainfall events to reduce the blackspot risk before sowing.

Delayed sowing of field pea not only reduces blackspot severity but also allows for pre-seeding weed control.

This forecast will be updated weekly between now and the end of June 2025.

Blackspot Manager considers both blackspot spore release levels and agronomic suitability for the sowing recommendations.

Sowing time can depend on a range of factors, and it is recommended to consult an agronomist to determine the optimal sowing window for your situation.

To view the latest forecast and find more information on blackspot refer to DPIRD's Blackspot in field peas disease forecast webpage.

The Blackspot Manager forecasts can be viewed online. DPIRD offers a free SMS service which involves a weekly text sent to subscribers to inform you of the blackspot risk and giving a recommendation if it is safe to sow. To subscribe to the free blackspot SMS service, text 'blackspot', your name, and nearest weather station to +61 475 959 932. We also send out a weekly email to those who prefer to receive this information in their email inbox. To subscribe to the direct email service, email Blackspot.Manager@dpird.wa.gov.au .

For more information on blackspot in field peas, or the forecasts, contact Principal Research Scientist Jean Galloway in Northam on +61 8 9690 2172.

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