

Backyard Buddies

Your monthly guide to animal and plant pests, diseases and weeds

October 2017



Creepy crawlies here to stay

Portuguese millipedes, *Ommatoiulus moreletii*

Rain and warm weather stimulates Portuguese millipede activity as they escape the wet, water-soaked soil in search of a mate and drier ground. It's this search, their attraction to light, and their extraordinary numbers that make them a nuisance to householders and businesses alike. The ultimate uninvited house-guest.

Native to southwest Europe, Portuguese millipedes (*Ommatoiulus moreletii*) arrived in South Australia (SA) in 1953 and despite eradication attempts and extensive research; there remains no practical solution for their total control or eradication from the environment.

When first discovered in Roleystone, Western Australia (WA) in 1986, they were already well established. Now, they're a widespread and common nuisance pest throughout south-west WA and are present in the ACT, NSW, VIC, TAS and SA.

Typically, the outbreaks we encounter are short-lived and associated with autumn and spring rains, and are much less frequently encountered in the cold of winter or the heat of summer.

Most prolific in the first few years after their introduction to a new area, the population will peak in the first few years before declining with time. This is likely due to a parasitic nematode, naturally present in native nematode populations, providing biological control.



Portuguese millipede, *Ommatoiulus moreletii*

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Management

When millipede populations are high, use two or more control methods (cultural, physical, chemical or biological) to reduce their impact and entry into buildings.

Turning off unnecessary outdoor lighting and setting millipede light traps away from the building can reduce their attraction to your home. Placing door seals/dust strips can help prevent their entry. Insecticide barrier sprays around

the home and base of walls will also help reduce their numbers and their movement up walls and drain pipes.

More information

The department does not provide control services for this pest and their advice is limited to what is displayed on the website: agric.wa.gov.au (search for Portuguese millipedes). If you do not have internet access, request a copy by calling (08) 9368 3080.



Portuguese millipedes climbing up walls

Help prevent the entry and spread of pests in WA

Pests can negatively impact your ability to grow home produce and the success of WA's horticulture and agriculture industries. To help with surveillance for new pests, please take photos, note the location as well as any damage seen, and send us a report via one of the options below:



Report unfamiliar pests

Use the MyPestGuide™ reporter app or website: mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au or email the Pest and Disease Information Service: padis@dpird.wa.gov.au