

Portuguese Millipede

As the name suggests the Portuguese Millipede, originates from Portugal and Spain. It was accidentally introduced into Australia in 1953. It was first recorded in W.A in the Perth hills suburb of Roleystone in 1986. It has since been found in many parts of metropolitan Perth and the southwest of the state, and so can no longer be considered as just a hills phenomenon.

Appearance: The Portuguese Millipede is identified by its smooth cylindrical body and can range in colour from grey to black. Mature Millipede may be between 2 and 4.5 cm long. They have a life span of about 2 years. When disturbed they commonly curl up to form a tight spiral. Also as a defensive method when agitated the millipede secretes a pungent yellowish secretion. When trodden on or crushed, they give rise to an unpleasant musty odour and leaves unsightly yellow stains on floor coverings and pavements.

The Portuguese Millipede as A Pest:

Although Portuguese Millipedes are not harmful to humans, they can be a serious nuisance when large numbers invade houses in autumn and spring. They normally live in plant debris and feed on decaying wood and leaf matter on the ground. They are attracted to light at night and this is probably why they are drawn to houses.

Controlling Portuguese Millipede:

Surface Spray and Residual Chemicals: can be applied to ground surfaces, walls, as well as door and window frames, to eliminate Millipedes attempting to enter buildings. Surface Sprays containing Cypermethrin, Propoxur or Permethrin (such as many Baygon and Mortein surface sprays are all useful).

Chemical Barrier Application: Carbaryl or cyfluthrin (Baythroid), Sprayed in a 1m strip around the edges of buildings and walls will kill Millipedes and act as a barrier to their entry. Baysol Snail & Slug Bait can be used to control Millipede populations in the garden. (***)but remember Baysol is poisonous to animals, cats, dog and people).

Clean Up: Millipedes seek shelter of decaying leaves, bark chips and other garden litter. Reducing the area of garden covered by organic matter such as compost, leaf litter and mulch, will help reduce Millipede populations by diminishing food and areas for shelter.

Turn The Lights Off: Turning off exterior lighting can reduce the numbers attracted to the light. Curtains and blinds will reduce light escaping outside.

Physical Barriers: Millipedes move by crawling and cannot cross smooth, verticle surfaces, so physical barriers can be used to stop the movement of millipedes into houses. Materials like galvanised steel, can be fixed to walls to stop Millipede entry. For detailed information on effective types of physical barriers See the W.A Department of Agriculture's **Garden Note (No.02) on Portuguese Millipedes** available from the Dept. of Ag or this can be view on the Dept. of Ag's web site at www.agric.wa.gov.au

Biological Control: On going efforts are being made to find a viable biological control for the Portuguese Millipede. At present a parasitic nematode is showing the most promise.



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