



Riverton Organic Growers Fact Sheet | www.sces.org.nz

MANAGING SPECIFIC 'PESTS'

WIREWORM



Wireworm in potato (Pixabay)

The wireworm is a slender, hard-bodied "worm" (actually the larva of a beetle) that is found when tilling the soil or harvesting root crops. It is present in most soil types year round. The adult wireworm is known as the click beetle. Wireworms can be an issue with root crops, particularly potatoes, as they burrow into the flesh, leading to unsightly holes and rotting. They seem to be most prolific in gardens that have recently been converted from pasture.



Click beetle
(Manaaki whenua
Landcare Research)

Management

You can try growing plants in the garden to repel them - mustard and buckwheat are reported to be disliked by wireworm, so they could be grown in rotation to susceptible crops like potatoes.

Thoroughly cultivating affected areas will deter wireworm - and if you have thrushes and blackbirds they will also help to reduce numbers.

A tin can with 5mm holes punched in it, filled with bits of potato or carrot and partly buried, will lure wireworm in - check regularly and remove any wireworm (chickens will enjoy the snack).

You could try a sacrificial planting of corn or potatoes to lure them away from your good crop.

If all else fails, pyrethrum- or neem-based pesticides can be used. Some of these are acceptable under organic management systems, but still need to be used with care.

SLUGS AND SNAILS

Many people find it a struggle to manage these slippery customers. There are plenty of suggestions for using crushed egg shells, sandpaper or sand to keep them out of gardens, but most of these do not actually work.

Management

The generally agreed best methods are either to enlist a small army of ducks (who will also poo in the garden - may or may not be a good thing!), bury a jar part-filled with beer (they are attracted to it and then drown) or to go out at night with a torch and collect them (definitely the most successful, but time-consuming!). Once they are collected, the best way to dispose of them is to turn them into eggs by feeding them to chickens or ducks (you could also flush them down the toilet if you have the stomach for it). You can see below that they are able to cross very sharp surfaces without harm, due to their mucous-covered bodies, which should give an indication of what they are capable of.



(Pics: Roaring Earth)