

Environmental Health Advice Note

PEST CONTROL SERIES

Clover mite *Bryobia praetiosa*

Key features

The adult female is between 0.6 and 0.7mm in length and is generally reddish in colour, however the colour is extremely variable and they are sometimes yellowish green.

These mites are long-legged with front legs being proportionally very long.

Another key identification feature of these mites is the presence on the rear portion of the body of a number of distinctively club shaped setae.

Biology

The female mite lays its eggs, bright red in colour, onto the bark of trees, rocks in the soil or on walls of buildings.

The eggs generally overwinter and then in the spring the larvae and nymphs of the mite feed on plant material, sucking the fluid from the leaves.

The life cycle can be extremely rapid in warmer parts of the country. A five-week life cycle is possible during optimum conditions.

Significance

The mites can be of horticultural importance since they have a very wide range of host plants amongst the various fruit trees and bushes.

In public health terms it is the frequent aggregation of large numbers of gravid females seeking oviposition sites that causes trouble. They are known to invade domestic premises in large numbers and while this can cause alarm they are in fact quite harmless.

Control

The mites do not bite man but nevertheless some form of remedial treatment may be necessary if they are occurring in sufficient numbers as to be a nuisance.

Acaricides containing pirimiphos methyl should give good control when applied to affected buildings.

If vegetation is to be treated then a pesticide approved for horticultural use for the control of mites on plants would be suitable to control this pest.

