PORTUGUESE MILLIPEDES FACT SHEET

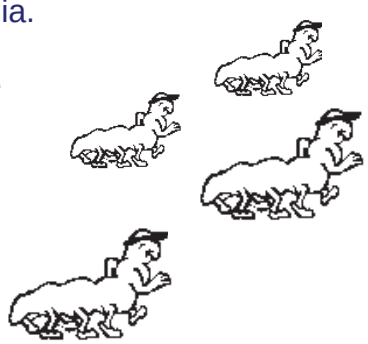
Fig. 1 – a single Portuguese millipede

WHAT ARE PORTUGUESE MILLIPEDES

Portuguese millipedes (fig. 1 right) are an introduced species of millipede, with a smooth cylindrical body, ranging in colour from black/grey to light brown. When disturbed, Portuguese millipedes commonly curl up into a tight spiral (fig. 2 below).

WHY ARE PORTUGUESE MILLIPEDES A PROBLEM

Portuguese millipedes were first found in Western Australia in the late 1980's in the Roleystone area. Since their initial discovery in Perth, they have slowly spread across the Darling Scarp. While previously restricted to the 'Hills' areas, they have recently entered the metropolitan area and the first reports of Portuguese millipedes within the City of Canning were received in 2001. Portuguese millipedes can also be found in South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania.



Unlike native millipedes, Portuguese millipedes may congregate in large numbers. They can cause home and business owners some distress and inconvenience when spring and autumn rainfall causes them to seek shelter - frequently resulting in the millipedes invading homes and buildings in significant numbers.

WHAT IS BEING DONE ABOUT PORTUGUESE MILLIPEDES

While the City of Canning's Local Laws include some provisions on the control of animals, insects and pests and may require the owner or occupier of premises to undertake measures to control or eliminate insects or pests on their property, Portuguese millipedes are not controlled by the City's Local Laws.


Fig. 2 Millipede curled in a spiral

While Portuguese millipedes do not pose a health or agricultural threat, are not harmful to humans, and have the benefit of assisting in the break down of garden litter into the soil, they cause a nuisance when they invade homes and buildings.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT PORTUGUESE MILLIPEDES?

There are a number of steps that can be taken to manage the population of Portuguese millipedes on a property:

Environmental Controls

- **Cleaning away leaf litter** and reducing the volume of compost around the home can reduce areas of shelter.
- **Turning off external lights** can reduce the numbers attracted to the home.
- **Install door seals** to the underside of external doors**.**

Chemical Controls

- **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 the buildings.
- **Chemical barrier application** must occur over an area wide enough to ensure that the millipedes are killed before entering the home. Chemical treatments can be applied to areas that Portuguese millipedes are observed or thought to breed.
- Currently, there are a number of chemicals registered for use on millipedes. The active ingredients to look for are:
  - Bendiocarb (Ficam®), carbaryl (Carbaryl®) and cyfluthrin (Baythroid®), sprayed in a 1 m strip around the edges of buildings and walls will kill millipedes and act as a barrier to their entry indoors.
  - Surface sprays containing cypermethrin (Mortein®), propoxur (Baygon®) or permethrin (Mortein®), applied to doorsteps and window ledges will help deter millipedes entering buildings.
  - Methiocarb (Baysol®) snail and slug bait will control millipede populations in garden beds. *Please ensure that Snail and Slug pellets are used where dogs, cats and children cannot access them.*
- **Please ensure that you carefully read and comply with the directions for use.**
- **Please note: the use of residual and broad range chemicals for millipede control may adversely affect other insect populations, including potential predators.**

Physical Barriers

- Smooth vertical surfaces, half-round barriers and moat and trap systems can be installed to prevent the entry of millipedes into buildings.

  Further information on the use of barriers and light traps can be obtained from the Department of Agriculture.

Further information on the control of Portuguese millipedes can be obtained from the Department of Agriculture (Western Australia)
Website: www.agric.wa.gov.au
or by contacting the Entomology Branch of the Department of Agriculture (Western Australia) on 9368 3333.