

Slugs are a significant problem in alkaloid poppy production in Tasmania. The most prevalent pest slug is *Deroceras reticulatum*, the grey field slug, but other slugs such as *Deroceras panormitanum*, the brown field slug and *Milax gagates*, the black-keeled slug can also be pests. Some of the most devastating problems in poppies occur because slugs attack the emerging seedlings and it is not uncommon that the damage is so severe that the seed has to be re-sown, sometimes even a third time. The sowing of poppies in spring coincides with peak slug activity.

Slugs move into the soil during the day and emerge over night feeding on the soil surface up to dawn. Slugs can eat several times their own weight in one night. Slug numbers build up rapidly in wet seasons and tend to increase when the land has been used for pasture for several years. Cultivation reduces slug numbers, and slug numbers may be reduced by natural predators such as, black shiny beetles called carabid beetles. Unfortunately carabid beetles are killed by broad spectrum insecticides, (including metiocarb) and their numbers are reduced by cultivation and heavy grazing.

Slug numbers are generally higher in moister parts of paddocks and lower on any ridges. It is worthwhile checking slug numbers by setting slug traps. This will enable the grower to check which part of the paddock is most infected, and if it is necessary to bait all or just some of the paddock. Simple slug traps can be made by cutting a piece of masonite about 30 x30cms, drilling a hole in the centre and securing it to the soil by means of a steel tent peg. It is important that the smooth surface is in contact with the soil and there is good soil/trap contact. Putting a small amount of chicken pellets under the trap will help attract the slugs to the trap. The trap should be checked pre- dawn. If there are two slugs or more under the trap **ERADICATE** Snail and Slug Killer should be used to reduce numbers. Unlike most slug killer products **ERADICATE** does not work by desiccation so there is no possibility of rehydration under cool moist conditions. The active ingredient in **ERADICATE** is an iron EDTA complex based, Ferric EDTA oxo-dimer, which is effective under cool moist conditions. It is important to apply slug baits several days before sowing. Baits are most likely to be eaten when there is little alternative feed.

ERADICATE should be applied at a rate of 5 kg/ha for light infestations up to 15 kg/ha for heavy infestations. To be effective the soil needs to be moist but if very heavy rain is expected it is advisable to delay treatment until after the storm has passed.

For further information on snails and slugs control, consult the **ERADICATE** website.



Deroceras reticulatum



Deroceras panormitanum



Milax gagates