

Kev's Guide to - Millipedes

Portuguese millipedes belong to a group of animals called Myriapoda (meaning many-legged), which also includes several native Australian millipedes and centipedes. Millipedes normally live outdoors where they feed on leaf litter, damp and decaying wood, fungus and vegetable matter like tender roots, mosses or green leaves on the ground.

Millipedes' slow-crawling, rounded bodies have two pairs of legs on each body segment and rows of glands that secrete a pungent yellowish secretion when the millipede is agitated. This secretion is composed of organic chemicals called quinones, which make the millipedes distasteful to predators such as birds.

Life cycle

Portuguese millipedes reproduce in autumn and early winter. They would probably begin mating in March or April and lay most of their eggs in April and May. This would explain why they appear so mobile and so abundant after the first rains.

Mature females lay about 200 pinhead sized, yellowish white eggs in a small hole they have made in the soil. An immobile, legless stage hatches from each egg and develops into the first active stage of the life cycle after about one week. This first stage has only three pairs of legs, but each time the animal moults until it is mature, more legs and body segments are added.

Millipede control

Portuguese millipedes are attracted to lights. Turn off external lights which are close to buildings and minimise the escape of light from buildings through use of curtains, blinds and weather-strips on

doors. Effective door seals will prevent the entry of these unwanted pests.

Millipedes in the house and garden will probably have resulted from eggs laid within 100m from the house, and while compost is good for gardens, it also allows higher populations of millipedes to develop. Reducing the area covered by organic matter such as compost, leaf litter and mulch, will help reduce millipede populations by diminishing food and areas of shelter.

Chemical control

Residual chemical barriers at least one metre wide present millipedes with a treated surface wide enough to kill them before they enter a house. Many pesticides have a limited active life and must be re-applied for ongoing control — especially during periods of rain.

Kev's Millipede treatment

Spraying a band 3 meters wide where possible as far out as possible from the home and all garden and mulched areas, some small-town house blocks may not benefit from this treatment due to block size. Doing annual block ant treatments can also help with year-round control of millipedes and your addressing multiple ground dwelling pests at the same time.

Price for this service starts at \$300 depending on block size and conditions.