STYELA CLAVA

THE CLUBBED TUNICATE – A TYPE OF SEA SQUIRT

The marine pest (a type of sea squirt) is widely established throughout parts of New Zealand.

It is not feasible to eradicate *Styela clava* in New Zealand due to its wide spread distribution and the fact that it has been present in New Zealand for some years. However, local elimination may be possible, and could slow the spread of this invasive tunicate to areas of high economic or social value.

Efforts are now focused on managing this pest long term and, importantly, preventing its spread from infested areas to other locations, particularly those of high environmental, social, or economic value.

PREVENT ITS SPREAD

If you are the owner of a vessel that is permanently moored in the water e.g. recreational yachts, launches and commercial vessels, you have a role to play in preventing the spread of *Styela clava* and marine pests like it.

Research shows marine pests are able to move from location to location by establishing themselves as part of fouling on vessel hulls or as larvae in seawater retained in vessels.

Styela amongst other fouling species

Some simple ways to avoid carrying hitchhikers on your next journey are:

- Keep your boat hull free of biofouling such as seaweed, barnacles and shellfish.
- Regularly clean your hull and equipment, paying special attention to:
  - the hull, keels and stabilisers;
  - intakes and outlets;
  - propellers and shafts;
  - rudders, rudder shafts and casings;
  - anchors, anchor chains and anchor wells.
- Ensure your vessel is regularly coated with an antifouling paint that is replaced at the interval recommended by the manufacturer/supplier and is in good condition.
- **Check your vessel hull for fouling before moving to a new location and clean if necessary.**

THE THREAT: *Styela clava* poses a threat to New Zealand's aquaculture industry with its ability to blanket oyster and mussel lines, and competing for space and food.

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STYELA CLAVA DESCRIPTION

- Individuals are usually club shaped with a tough leathery skin that varies from brownish-white, yellow-brown or reddish-brown.
- The body is cylindrical, tapering to a stalk, with a holdfast that anchors it to surfaces.
- Adults grow up to 16cm long.
- Under water two short siphons are visible on top of the organism, but these are difficult to see out of water.
- Generally organisms appear coated in fouling fuzz and can look furry.

While solitary organisms, individuals can settle close to one another, covering wharves, docks, boat hulls, mooring lines, buoys and aquaculture structures.

Styela clava on mussel line

WHERE IS THE *STYELA CLAVA* SEA SQUIRT LIKELY TO BE FOUND?

- *Styela clava* prefers protected areas such as bays and harbours, away from wave action.
- It establishes from the low tide mark down to approximately 25 metres.
- It prefers to settle on hard surfaces, particularly man-made structures. Anything in the water that is not covered in silt or coated with antifouling paint is at risk. It may also be found attached to rocks, seaweed and on shellfish.
- The organism can tolerate a wide range of water temperatures and salinity.

Don't spread *Styela clava* around New Zealand. Keep your boat bottom clean. If you are moving location, check for fouling and clean if necessary.

Photo: Bruce Lines – Diving Services NZ Ltd

Styela clava on wharf piles amongst other biofouling organisms

For more information on the sea squirt and preventing its spread, visit the website:

www.biosecurity.govt.nz/seasquirt

To report a suspected find of the clubbed tunicate sea squirt please call:

0800 80 99 66

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