

Gambusia

Gambusia affinis

Description

Colour: Gambusia are small grey fish. The back is a greenish olive to brownish colour, the sides grey with a bluish sheen, and the belly a silvery white.

Size: Gambusia grow to a length of 60 mm.

Body: Gambusia are stout fish. The head and body are covered with large scales.

Fins: The caudal fin and tail are round. The dorsal fin has small black spots.

Head: The mouth points upwards. The eyes are very large and greyish green in colour.

Origin

Native to fresh water in the Gulf of Mexico.

Introduced into New Zealand in the 1930s.

Where are gambusia found?

Gambusia are generally found in the shallow margins of slow flowing ponds, wetlands, streams or lakes, they are often seen schooling together along shallow margins and around vegetation.

They can tolerate poor water quality, high salinity levels and a wide range of water temperatures.



How do gambusia spread?

Gambusia may move to connected waterways particularly during flood events.

People may accidentally or deliberately spread fish to other waterways or private ponds.

Why are gambusia a problem?

Gambusia are an extremely aggressive species and attack native species by nipping at eyes and fins. They eat insect larvae, eggs of other fish and crustaceans and may significantly alter native freshwater communities. They also compete with native species for food.

Status as a pest animal in the Bay of Plenty

Restricted Pest Animal (refer to the Bay of Plenty Regional Council Regional Pest Management Plan).

Rules require land occupiers to prevent the spread of gambusia from any pond or waterway.

It is an offence under sections 52 and 53 of the Biosecurity Act 1993 to sell, offer for sale, display, release, move or breed gambusia in the Bay of Plenty region.

How do I get rid of gambusia?

Removal of fish from waterways is difficult and requires expert advice. For advice, or to confirm the identity of a fish, call:

- Bay of Plenty Regional Council on 0800 884 880 or email info@boprc.govt.nz
- Your local Department of Conservation office.

For more information contact a Bay of Plenty Regional Council Land Management Officer.

