

Report this pest



Clubbed tunicate

Why is it a pest?

Clubbed tunicate (*Styela clava*) can form dense colonies of up to 1500 individuals per square metre, competing for space and food with native species such as mussels and oysters.

They are highly effective filter feeders, preying on the larvae of commercially important fisheries species and impacting native biodiversity. Clubbed tunicate can grow rapidly on marine farming lines, vessel hulls, and other structures, increasing costs for maintenance, harvesting, and fuel. This pest spreads via vessels, as adults attached to boat hulls (fouling), or as larvae either in ballast water or carried by water currents.

It has been detected in Otago, found on artificial structures in Otago Harbour. It has not been detected in Southland, and efforts are focused on preventing its spread further south.



PHOTO: ANNA KELLAGHER

What does it look like?

- **Size:** Up to 16 centimetres long.
- **Appearance:** Long, club-shaped body on a tough stalk with a leathery, knobby surface. Colour ranges from brownish-white, yellowish-brown, to reddish-brown. It often appears fuzzy underwater.
- **Distinctive features:** Two closely spaced tubes (called siphons) at the top of the body, usually surrounded by warty little bumps.
- **Habitat:** Commonly found from the shallows up to 25 metres deep. Clubbed tunicate attaches to rocky coastlines, reefs, boat hulls, piers, pontoons, and underwater farming structures. Prefers sheltered sites but can be found in semi-exposed waters.

Common name:

Clubbed tunicate

Scientific name:

Styela clava

Management programme:

Unwanted organism

An unwanted organism is not managed under the ORC Pest Plan but may be controlled as part of our Biosecurity Strategy.



**Report
this pest!**

If you have seen or suspect the presence of this pest, you **must report** the sighting to us at orc.govt.nz/reportpests

When can I spot it best?

Late summer to early autumn
(January to April).

This period often coincides with peak settlement and when individuals are most visible. Growth is typically rapid during warmer months, making colonies more prominent.

What are the rules?

It is an offence to breed, knowingly communicate, exhibit, multiply, propagate, release, or sell, an unwanted organism (Biosecurity Act 1993).

What should I do?

ORC is currently developing a marine biosecurity programme and needs to obtain more information on species distributions before pursuing management options. If you think you have spotted exotic caulerpa, please report it.

Preventing the spread of clubbed tunicate is the best strategy, as removal of invasive marine pests is both difficult and expensive.

Cleaning your craft and gear for biosecurity purposes is an important way to help protect the marine environment. Just as regular maintenance keeps your equipment in good condition, biosecurity cleaning keeps the ocean healthy for everyone.

The three main types of marine biosecurity cleaning for boaties are:

For all boats

- Check and clean your gear and anchor, and remove any on-board water before moving to another waterbody.

For trailer boats

- Clean your boat thoroughly when you get home.

For moored boats

- Regularly clean off slime and maintain your antifouling.



PHOTO: SAMUEL IGLESIAS

Report this pest



Help us find clubbed tunicate

You must notify Otago Regional Council if you suspect the presence of this pest.

If you think you've seen it:



Note the location



Take a photo
(If possible)



Report this pest
at orc.govt.nz/reportpests

For more information, visit orc.govt.nz/clubbedtunicate

