

Gambusia (mosquito fish)

Poeciliidae - *Gambusia affinis*



What does it look like?

Gambusia are small fish with a greenish silvery sheen. Mature females grow to 6 cm and males to 3.5 cm. They mature at six weeks old and are short lived but breed rapidly and repeatedly enabling populations to build up to large numbers very quickly. Females give birth to live young. Consequently only one pregnant female is needed to start a new population.

Why is it a problem?

Gambusia are aggressive and frequently attack native fish, nipping at their eyes and fins - endangered galaxiids and mudfish are especially vulnerable.

Gambusia also competes with native fish for food and have been known to eat native fish eggs.

A single gambusia female produces several broods a year and around 50 offspring per brood, offspring which can reach sexual maturity in as little as three to four weeks. Given such prolific reproductive behaviour, gambusia can quickly expand to outnumber native species and take over a waterway once they are introduced.

Gambusia live in the shallow margins of slow flowing ponds, wetlands and streams, particularly around aquatic plants. They can tolerate poor water quality, high salinity levels and a wide range of water temperatures.

Populations exist throughout Northland, Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty and Hawkes Bay, with isolated populations found around Whanganui.

Notify Council

If you have seen or suspect the presence of Gambusia (mosquito fish) you must report the sighting to Environment Southland immediately.

Management programme

- Unwanted organism
- Organisms of interest

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