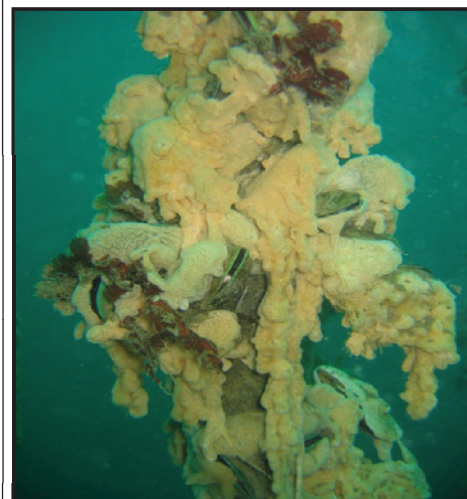


HAVE YOU SEEN THIS SEA CREATURE?



Didemnum vexillum sea squirt

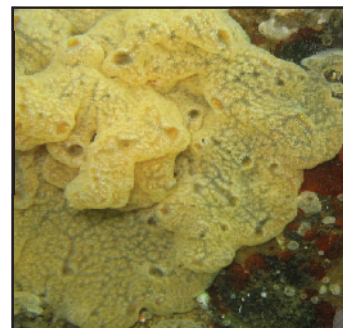
What is *Didemnum vexillum*?

Didemnum vexillum is a type of sea squirt that quickly builds large populations. It was first identified in New Zealand in 2001 in Whangamata, hence its common name, the Whangamata sea squirt. It is currently known to occur in Whangamata, Tauranga Harbour, Port Nelson, the Marlborough Sounds and Port Tarakohe in Golden Bay.

What does it look like?

- *Didemnum vexillum* is a spongy textured sea squirt with a leathery feel. It does not feel slimy.
- It is a distinctive mustard or orange/yellow colour.
- It often appears like a yellow wax dripping from artificial structures such as ropes or mussel lines.
- Its surface has dark leaf-like veins with tiny pores.

Didemnum vexillum can look similar to other marine creatures, particularly other types of sea squirts. Its point of difference is its colour and its leathery, not slimy, feel.



Close up showing veins

What do I do if I think I've found it?

If you think you've seen *Didemnum vexillum*, do not attempt to remove it. Take a good note of its location and immediately phone: 0800 4 DEBRIS or 0800 433 2747.

This is the contact number for the local office of the Marine Farming Association, which is leading an active control operation against populations of *Didemnum* in the Marlborough-Nelson area.



THE THREAT

Didemnum vexillum is a threat to the mussel industry and the wider marine environment due to its ability to smother other sea life.

November 2007



For more information visit:

www.biosecurity.govt.nz/didemnum



New Zealand Government

Where would I find it?

Didemnum vexillum particularly likes to establish on artificial structures such as wharf piles, jetties, mooring lines and vessel hulls. When living beneath surfaces, colonies of *Didemnum vexillum* droop or hang.

How does it spread?

Colonies of *Didemnum vexillum* can spread over short distances naturally through sexual reproduction, releasing tailed larvae that survive for less than one hour and are carried in water currents. It can also reproduce through fragments breaking off and growing into new colonies.

Didemnum vexillum can also be spread over longer distances on infected vessel hulls, marine equipment and as fragments in ballast water.

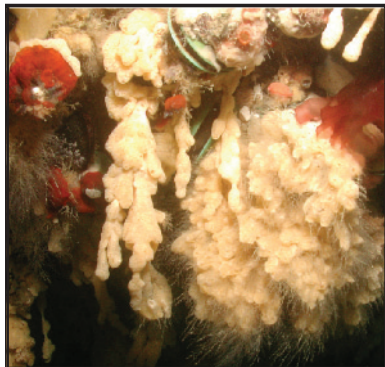
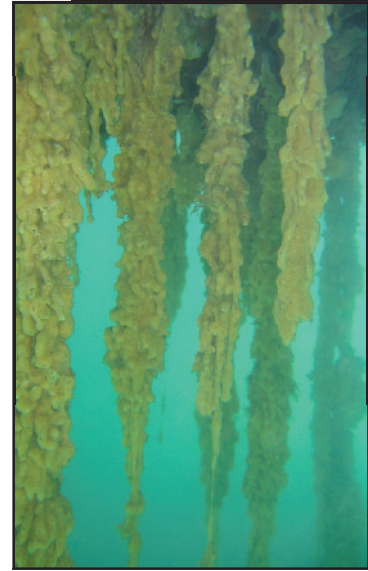
What can I do to stop it spreading?

Keep your vessel hull and marine/aquaculture equipment clean and, where appropriate, treated with antifouling paint.

It is very important that vessel hulls are kept clean and free of fouling.

A dirty boat hull or other moveable marine structures enable *Didemnum vexillum* and other marine pests to take hold and hitch-hike to a new location.

- Where possible clean your vessel hull in a facility that can collect the wash-off and dispose of it on land.
- Before moving your vessel or marine/aquaculture equipment, check it is clean and free of excessive fouling.
- Drying marine equipment for at least 48 hours is a good control measure for *Didemnum vexillum*.



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