

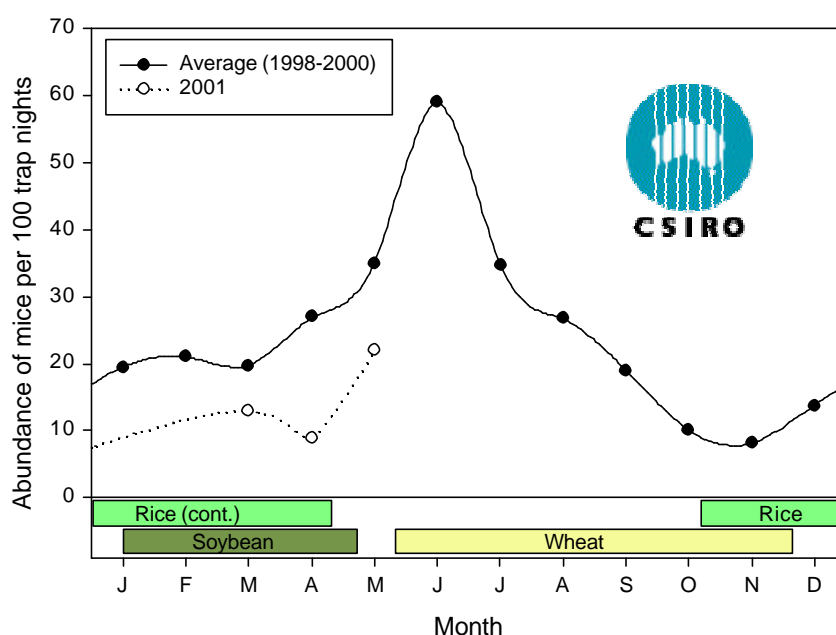
## Update on mouse situation in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, Southern New South Wales – May 2001 CSIRO Rodent Research Group

The CSIRO Rodent Research Group conducts regular trapping on eight farms around Coleambally, Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, Southern New South Wales. This is part of an experiment to test the effectiveness of farm management practices on the impact of mice, funded by the Natural Heritage Trust (through the Bureau of Rural Sciences), in collaboration with NSW Agriculture.

### Abundance of mice

Mice are monitored from live-capture traps set in winter cereal (wheat) paddocks and margins, summer irrigated crops (soybean) and margins, and irrigated rice for two nights, roughly every 2 months. Trapping began in September 1998.

The mouse populations follow a regular pattern of abundance each year (Figure 1). The data collected so far this year (2001) are slightly below average.



**Figure 1.** Average abundance of mice in the MIA since September 1998 with current abundance of mice for 2001.

### Breeding

The breeding season for 2000/2001 began in September and finished in May, which is usual for this area.

### Mouse damage to crops

Mouse damage to crops has generally been average or below average (farmers generally do not notice crop damage by mice when it is less than 5%):

- winter cereals: 2.3%, December 2000 (normally about 2%),
- rice: 0.5%, March 2001 (normally 1.2%), and
- soybeans: <0.1%, April 2001 (normally 1.5%).

We also monitored damage to a maize crop that was a rice crop in the previous season. Damage was 11%, but because of the rice crop, there were many mice present.

### General comments

The likelihood of damage to winter cereals at sowing is low. We expect numbers to peak in June. Survival of mice over winter will govern the trajectory of the population growth in 2001/2002.