

## *Styela clava* The Clubbed Tunicate

## MARINE PEST GUIDE



### Identifying features

- An ascidian or sea squirt that filter feeds.
- Individuals are club shaped with a tough leathery skin.
- Cylindrical body tapering to a stalk, with a holdfast that anchors it to surfaces.
- The stalk usually comprises 1/3 of the total length.
- Juveniles may not be stalked.
- Grows up to 16 cm long.
- Colour varies between brownish-white, yellow-brown or reddish-brown.
- Two short siphons visible on top of organism when underwater.

### Where are they found?

- They prefer to settle on hard surfaces, particularly man-made structures.
- Surfaces without anti-fouling paint.  
They may also be found attached to rocks, seaweed and on shellfish.
- Prefers protected areas such as bays and harbours, away from wave action.
- Low intertidal to shallow subtidal, but as deep as 25m.  
Tolerates a wide range of water temperatures and salinity.

[www.biosecurity.govt.nz/seasquirt](http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/seasquirt)

0800 80 99 66



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### *Pyura pachydermatina*



### What looks similar to it?

*Pyura pachydermatina* – a native species that occurs throughout New Zealand waters and could be confused with *Styela clava* because it also has a stalk. **BUT** the stalk of *Pyura pachydermatina* is much longer – 2/3 to 3/4 the overall length of the organism, and it is often white/purple-red in colour.

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### Why be concerned about the clubbed tunicate?

The clubbed tunicate is a potential threat to New Zealand's aquaculture industry. In numbers, it blankets oyster and mussel lines, suffocating growing shellfish and competing for food.

### If you think you have seen this sea squirt

- Note the location of where it is growing, and if possible collect samples and freeze in a plastic bag.
- Contact Biosecurity New Zealand on 0800 80 99 66.

Photos supplied by Cawthron Institute

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