

Lucid key to Theridiidae spiders of biosecurity importance to New Zealand

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Spiders of the family Theridiidae, commonly known as cobweb spiders or comb-footed spiders, are one of the most diverse groups with over 2,200 species worldwide. They are also one of the most species-rich families in New Zealand. So far only 41 species from 15 genera have been described, however, there may be up to 200 species in New Zealand. Many species were described more than 100 years ago and are not recognisable based on their original descriptions. Most of the New Zealand Theridiidae fauna is native (some endemic to genus level), but the majority of species found around human modified environments are introduced species from Australia and other parts of the world. Theridiidae are some of the most commonly intercepted invertebrates according to the New Zealand border inspection database. They account for 27% of all spider interceptions, so are considered of high biosecurity importance. A Lucid Key to Theridiidae Spiders of Biosecurity Importance to New Zealand has been produced and features will be shown and discussed. This key includes introduced and native theridiid species commonly associated with the human environment, species that have been intercepted at the border, widely-distributed foreign species and species found overseas that are a likely biosecurity threat. We have tried to avoid specialist morphological terms in order to make the key accessible to many users.

