

MEDITERRANEAN FANWORM

Sabella spallanzanii

The threat: This pest has the potential to be a significant threat to New Zealand's marine biodiversity, through competing with native organisms for food and space, and altering native marine ecosystems. As well, it could be a nuisance species, fouling aquaculture sites and wharf facilities. A small population of the fanworm has been detected in Lyttelton Port.

What is Mediterranean fanworm?

The Mediterranean fanworm (*Sabella spallanzanii*) is a marine bristle worm which rapidly forms large, dense colonies or groups on submerged hard surfaces and on any fixed object (such as shells and stones) on the sea floor.

The filter feeding fanworm is native to the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts of Europe but it has also established in Brazil and Australia.

What does it look like?

The Mediterranean fanworm has a long leathery, flexible tube or stalk supporting a single semi-circular spiral feeding fan that can reach 10 – 15cm in diameter. The tube itself can grow up to 40cm long.

It commonly forms clumps of several individuals, creating a canopy of feeding fans that stretches over the growing surface.

This worm generally lives inside its tube, but extends a fan-like crown of tentacles through the opening of its tube to feed. If disturbed, the fan quickly withdraws into the tube and the opening collapses to a slit.

The tube is often muddy-looking and can be covered with encrusting or fouling organisms.

The fan itself varies from white and pale fawn through to orange and banded red-brown in colour.

Where would I find it?

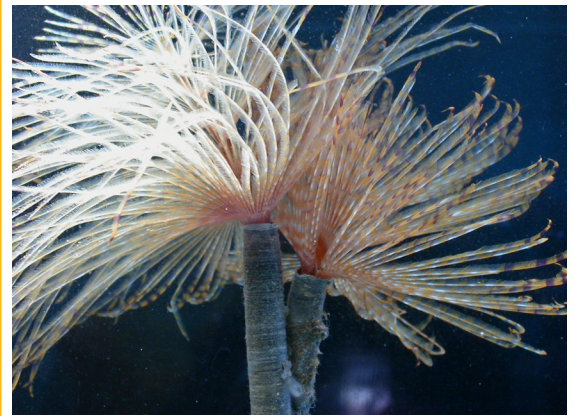
The Mediterranean fanworm likes sheltered, nutrient-rich waters such as in harbours.

It is generally found in shallow waters in depths from one to 30 metres.

Worms generally colonise any hard surface, including rocks, concrete, wood and steel, as well as seabed organisms such as mussels and oysters.

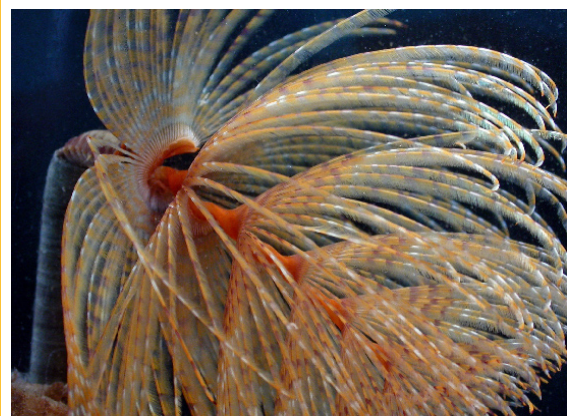
It has been found on the hulls of moored vessels and on wharf structures and marina piles and pontoons.

PTO for information on how you can avoid spreading the Mediterranean fanworm.



FAN WORM SPECIMENS FROM LYTTELTON

Photo courtesy of G Read, NIWA



SINGLE SPECIMAN SHOWING SPIRAL FAN

Photo courtesy of G Read, NIWA



Individual specimen from Lyttelton Port. Organism dead, and displayed here out of its tube. Fan tentacles on left of shot.

Photo courtesy of G Read, NIWA

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: WWW.BIOSECURITY.GOV.T.NZ

November 2008

New Zealand Government

NEW ZEALAND. IT'S OUR
PLACE TO PROTECT.





Photo: CSIRO



Photo: AIMS

How does the fanworm spread?

The Mediterranean fanworm spreads naturally by reproduction, with mature female worms able to release more than 50,000 larvae into the water in one hit during the autumn and winter reproductive season.

Fanworms can spread by growing on dirty vessels and equipment and then being relocated. They can also travel growing in enclosed wet areas on ships, or with other marine fouling organisms as larvae in ballast water.

What can I do to stop it spreading?

- If you own or operate a moored boat, keep its hull clean and the antifouling paint in good condition. Dirty boat bottoms can pick up hitchhiking marine pests such as the Mediterranean fanworm and move them to new locations.
- Before moving your boat or marine/aquaculture equipment, check it is clean and free of fouling matter. Pay particular attention to 'niche' areas on your boat – areas that either protrude or hold water e.g. anchor chains and wells, water intakes, propellers etc.

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

If you believe you have seen the Mediterranean fanworm, please take a good note of its location, collect and freeze a sample of one or more worms if you can, and phone MAF Biosecurity New Zealand's freephone: **0800 80 99 66**.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: WWW.BIOSECURITY.GOV.TZ

November 2008