Leatherjackets are the larvae of Crane-flies (Tipula spp), also known as Daddy-long-legs. They cause considerable damage to roots and stems of many agricultural and horticultural crops, particularly of young plants. They are soil living larvae with a thick, tough wrinkled skin. They are also legless and grey brown and grow to about 2 inches in length.

**Life Cycle**

Adult Crane-flies emerge from pupae between July and September. After mating, females lay eggs in the soil in grasses and cereals. The eggs hatch 2 – 3 weeks later. The larvae (leatherjackets) actively feed during mild spells in the autumn and into the spring and pupate in the soil in late May – June. In 90% of cases the adults stay and lay eggs near to where they emerge, causing the population to increase in the same field if control measures are not taken.

**Symptoms**

Leatherjacket numbers may vary widely from year to year. On established grassland high infestations may result in large bare patches appearing in the field. With low levels of infestation spring growth may be impeded. Leatherjacket activity reduces yield and, at the economic threshold of 1 million leatherjackets per ha, the weight of leatherjackets feeding below ground can be greater than the weight of livestock above ground.

New sowings or reseeded leys may be completely destroyed. The presence of large numbers of rooks, crows and starlings also indicates the presence of large populations of leatherjackets.

**Prevention and Control**

Chemical control using an approved formulation of Chlorpyrifos will give consistently high levels of control.

Summer ploughing may destroy up to 50% of leatherjackets. Ploughing will also expose leatherjackets to predators such as rooks, crows and starlings.

Consolidate the ground using heavy rolls as this will impede leatherjacket movement.

Keep pasture tightly grazed or cut from July to September to reduce the chances of adults laying eggs.

Don’t grow susceptible crops on land that has been down to grass for over 2 years.

Ensure that the soil is in excellent conditions before planting to enable the crop to germinate and establish rapidly.

Monitor leatherjacket populations using the ADAS monitoring scheme.

Monitor Crane-fly populations.