

# Ergot

## *Claviceps purpurea*

### **Identification:**

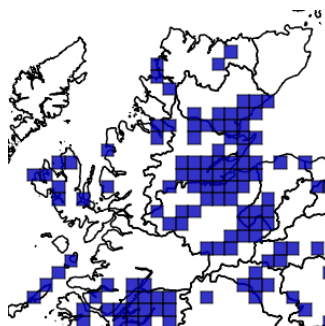
This parasitic fungus is easily recognised as hard, black, slightly curved growths on the florets of grasses. These sclerotia are always longer than the florets, so are obvious. On small grasses they are typically 5-10mm long, but on the robust coastal Lyme-grass *Leymus arenarius* sclerotia may be over 20mm long (as in the image).



Ergot *Claviceps purpurea*.  
Photo © Murdo Macdonald.

### **Distribution:**

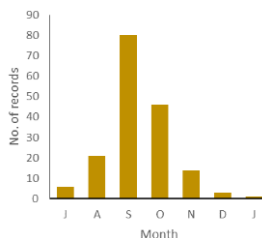
Ergot is widely distributed in Highland, but we have some extensive gaps in the map. Records from these white spaces would be especially welcome.



The distribution of records of Ergot on the NBN Atlas.

### **When to look for it:**

Ergot first becomes visible in late July, and can be found through late summer, autumn and into winter. It is most usually found in September and October.



### **Similar species:**

There should not be any scope for confusion if a growth of this shape is found on the flowering heads of grasses.

### **Notes:**

Ergot has an interesting and rather dark history summarised in [this Wikipedia article](#).

**\*\*\* Ergot is highly poisonous! \*\*\***