

Backyard Buddies

Your monthly guide to animal and plant pests, diseases and weeds

February 2018

Not so sweet potato

Sweet potato weevil damage

The sweet potato weevil, *Cylas formicarius*, is a devastating pest of sweet potatoes. It causes damage to the tuber whilst in the ground and after harvest whilst in storage.

This insect is of quarantine concern and is a Declared pest in Western Australia.

While sweet potato weevil is found widely around the world in tropical regions, in Australia it is found only in Queensland where it is widespread.

Most of WA's sweet potatoes are imported from Queensland.

Whether your sweet potatoes are purchased or home grown, keep an eye out for signs of this pest, and if you suspect anything, report it quickly.

Crop losses can range from 5-95% where this pest is has established

What to look for

- Damaged tubers
- Live weevils

Adult weevils are less than 1cm and have a black head and snout (rostrum). The antennae, thorax and legs are orange to reddish brown; the abdomen and elytra are a dark metallic blue.



Adult sweet potato weevil, *Cylas formicarius*

The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from the use or release of this information or any part of it.

© Western Australian Agriculture Authority, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, 2018

Adults are often hidden from view as they feed on the under surface of the leaves. Females lay eggs into a small cavity chewed into the sweet potato tuber or stem. When the egg hatches the larvae bores into the tuber and creates winding tunnels packed with faecal matter while it feeds and grows.



Evidence of sweet potato weevil damage

How to help

Inspect both home grown and store-bought produce for signs of live insects

or damage similar to that in the photos. If you find something suspicious, place the sample in a plastic bag or container, place in the freezer and then report! You will be asked for photos to assist with identification, and to provide details about the location of purchase. If found in the home garden, please inspect the plants further, take samples and report. We'll provide additional advice and guidance from there.

More information

More information about this pest is available on our website:

agric.wa.gov.au - search 'sweet potato weevil'.

Report unfamiliar pests

Use the **MyPestGuide™ Reporter** app: **mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au** or contact the Pest and Disease Information Service

