

# Fact sheet

## Sorghum greenbug

### What is Sorghum greenbug?

Sorghum greenbug (*Schizaphis graminum*) is a major aphid pest of sorghum, as well as being found on over 70 grass species, major grains and cereal crops.

Sorghum greenbug can cause damage during the seedling phase, however its greatest effect occurs during the reproductive phase of the crop. As it feeds toxins are injected into the plant causing damage. Greenbug infestation leads to smaller kernels and reduced yield. Small grains, primarily wheat, are the winter host; however volunteer grasses (e.g. Johnson grass) can also act as interim hosts.

### What does it look like?

Adult greenbugs are pear shaped and grow up to 1.6 mm in length. Both adults and nymphs (immature) are pale green to yellow with a darker green stripe along their back. Tips of the siphuncles (exhaust pipes) and legs are black. Antennae are as long or longer than the body length. Both winged and wingless forms may be present in a colony.

Eggs are elliptical, 0.75 mm in length and are pale yellow-green and become darker in colour as they age.

### What can it be confused with?

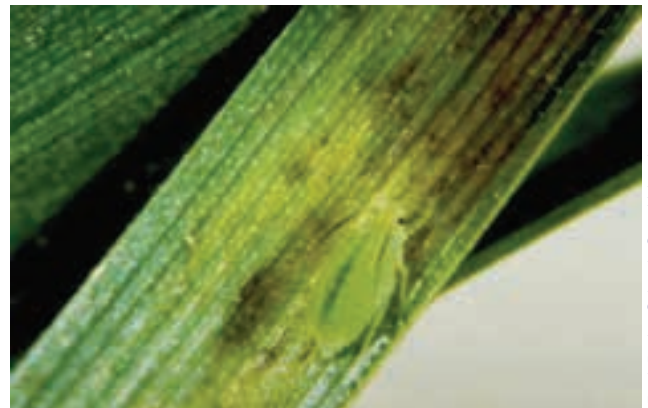
Sorghum greenbug is similar in appearance to other cereal aphid species, such as the rose grain, corn or oat aphids (*Rhopalosiphum* species) which are present in Australia and 2-3 mm in size. The Corn aphid is light to dark green with dark siphuncles and feeds on sorghum, maize, winter cereals and grasses.

Rose grain aphids and Oat aphids feed on wheat, barley and oat crops. Rose grain aphids are light green with a darker stripe along their back. They have long pale siphunculi whilst the Oat aphid is olive green in colour with a pear shaped body.



Leaf discoloration typical of Sorghum greenbug infestation

Alton N Sparks Jr, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org



Adult Sorghum greenbug on wheat blade

Frank Peairs, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org



Infestation of Sorghum greenbugs on sorghum, with reddish discoloration from feeding

Frank Peairs, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org



Adult Sorghum greenbug

D.C. Peters, CAB International

**If you see anything unusual, call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline**

**EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE  
1800 084 881**

### What should I look for?

Like all aphids, Sorghum greenbugs are usually found in colonies. They colonise the underside of leaves and produce sticky honeydew when in high numbers. Whilst feeding, aphids inject salivary toxins into plant tissue. Red to rusty brown spots on leaves can be caused by the aphid feeding resulting in the injection of a chlorophyll destroying toxin. Damaged leaves begin to die, turning yellow then brown from the outer edges.

Greenbugs can also transmit Maize dwarf mosaic virus and may predispose sorghum to charcoal rot.

### How does it spread?

Adults can spread by actively flying throughout the crop or using wind currents. Long distance dispersal also occurs by 'hitchhiking' on machinery, clothes or plant material. Like all aphids, Sorghum greenbug has a range of alternate (summer and winter) hosts for carry over between crops.

### Where is it now?

Sorghum greenbug is widespread in Europe, Africa, Asia and North, South and Central America.

### How can I protect my farm from Sorghum greenbug?

Check your crops frequently, including the underside of leaves, for the presence of new pests and unusual symptoms.

Make sure you are familiar with common pests of sorghum so you can tell if you see something different.



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