

# Avocado seed moth

EXOTIC PEST – CALL THE EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE IF SUSPECTED

## What is Seed moth?

The Seed moth (*Stenoma catenifer*) is a pest that primarily affects avocado production by damaging fruit, twigs, and young trees.

## What does it look like?

Adult moths are light tan with a "C" shaped row of dots on their forewings. Females measure around 15 mm long with a wingspan of up to 30 mm. Larvae grow to 25 mm in length and transition from creamy white to light rose, later becoming violet and turquoise. Infestation is identifiable by:

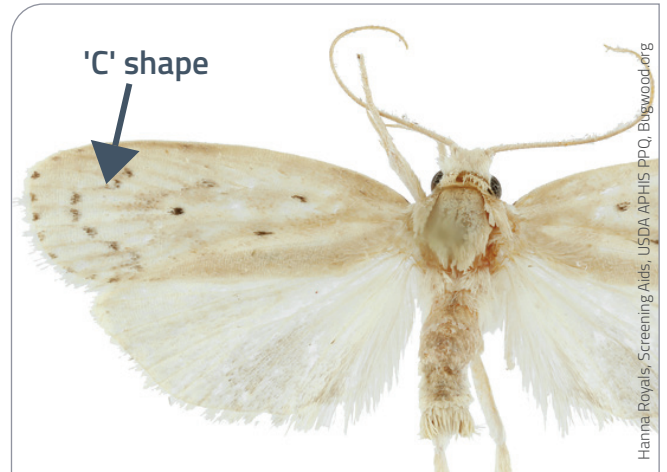
- A hole in the fruit skin with darkening around it.
- Whitish exudates running down the fruit.
- Frass around feeding galleries.
- White fungus near the entry hole.

## What damage does it do?

- Larvae feed inside fruit, damaging seeds and pulp, leading to premature fruit drop.
- Twig and branch burrowing affect flowering and may kill young twigs and stems.
- Heavy infestations can kill young avocado trees.
- Up to 100% fruit damage has been reported, despite pesticide use.
- Particularly severe damage occurs to Hass avocados.
- Trade in avocado fruit and planting material would be significantly restricted due to their association with the pest.

## What can it be confused with?

Other moths from the Stenomatinae family may look similar to the Avocado seed moth. However, *Stenoma catenifer* can be readily distinguished by the characteristic "C" shape formed by the dark spots on its forewings.



*Stenoma catenifer*

Hanna Royals, Screening Aids, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org



*Stenoma catenifer* damage showing whitish exudates and holes in the side of the fruit.



Avocado stem with *Stenoma catenifer* larva (left) and seed with *S. catenifer* frass and pupa (right).

Mark Hobbs, Inlet and Jackson 2016



### Where is it now?

Native to Mexico, Central, and South America, the Seed moth is prevalent in tropical and subtropical regions of Latin America. It severely impacts avocado production in Brazil and caused the collapse of the Galapagos Islands' avocado industry. Backyard orchards often serve as pest reservoirs.

### What are the risk materials and pathways it can move around on?

- Risk materials include infested fruit, planting material, and soil.
- Natural spread occurs over short distances by flying adults.
- Human-assisted spread occurs through infested fruit or planting material containing eggs, larvae, pupae, or adults.
- The pest can also travel via packing materials, clothing, tools, and machinery.
- Immature stages could be transported with fruit, seeds, soil, or leaf litter.

### On-farm biosecurity practices

Developing an on-farm biosecurity plan and making sure staff follow good biosecurity practices are functional ways to reduce the risk of pests and diseases entering your orchard. Suggested practices for Seed moth include:

- Monitor regularly and maintain comprehensive records of pest and disease monitoring.
- Use planting material from accredited nurseries.
- Have a visitor and staff register.
- Wash footwear and vehicles to reduce the risk of spread and avoid sharing equipment.
- Dispose of pruning and other plant waste material appropriately.
- Familiarise yourself with common avocado pests and report anything unusual.

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*Stenoma catenifer* eggs on an avocado branch.

Mark Hoddle, Molet and Jackson 2016

If you see anything unusual, call the  
**Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.**

**EXOTIC PLANT  
PEST HOTLINE  
1800 084 881**

Use trees from ANVAS accredited nurseries

