

Papaya mealybug

NOTIFIABLE PEST – CALL THE EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE IF SUSPECTED

What is Papaya mealybug?

Papaya mealybug (*Paracoccus marginatus*) is a small, invasive insect that feeds on the sap of plants. While it primarily damages papaya, it can infest a wide range of plants, including avocados. This pest is known for its rapid reproduction and ability to spread easily, making it a significant biosecurity concern. If it were to become established in avocado-growing regions, it could pose serious risks to the industry, affecting yield, fruit quality, and trade.

What does it look like?

Adults:

- Females are 2–3.5 mm long, 1.4 mm wide, wingless, with a slightly flattened, elongated, segmented, soft body covered in mealy wax (sometimes resembling cotton wool). They have short, waxy filaments around the edges.
- Males are pinkish, about 1 mm long and 0.3 mm wide, with an elongated oval body and well-developed wings.

Nymphs:

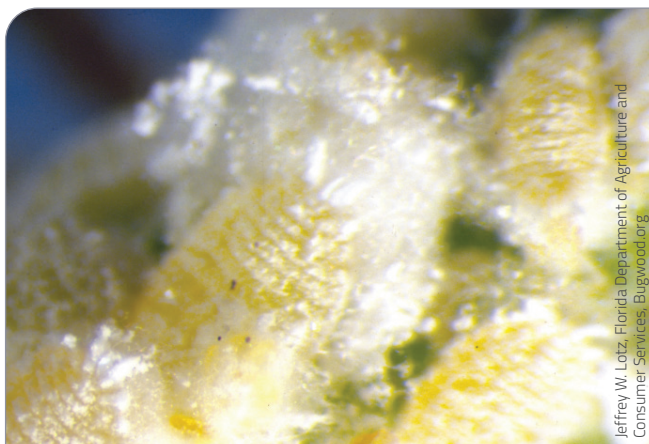
- 'Crawlers' are 0.3 mm long and yellowish or pink.

What damage does it do?

- Papaya mealybug attacks a wide range of vegetables, ornamental plants, and fruits, including avocado.
- It feeds on above-ground plant parts, particularly leaves and fruit.
- It extracts phloem sap and excretes sugary honeydew, which coats plant surfaces and promotes sooty mould growth.
- Fruit becomes inedible due to thick white waxy buildup.



Paracoccus marginatus one adult female, two ovisacs and three immatures



Adult *Paracoccus marginatus*



Female *Paracoccus marginatus*



Where is it now?

- Native to Mexico and Central America, where it is not a significant pest due to natural predators.
- Became a pest outside its native region in the early 1990s and has since spread to over 60 countries across Africa, Asia, North America, South America, and Oceania.
- Widespread in Darwin, Palmerston, and rural areas of the Northern Territory. More recently it has spread to south-east Queensland.
- Expected to continue spreading, with a warming climate increasing its potential range.

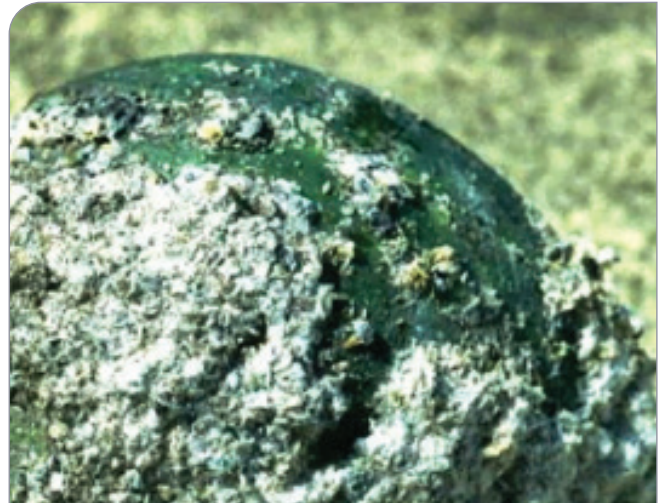
What are the risk materials and pathways it can move around on?

- Infested avocado fruits, leaves, or planting material transported via trade or human activity.
- Infested material from other plants including vegetables, fruits and ornamentals.
- Natural spread via wind and movement of crawlers.
- Contaminated clothing, footwear, vehicles, and equipment.

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 papaya mealybug include:

- Monitor regularly and maintain comprehensive records of pest and disease monitoring.
- Include non-avocado crops and ornamentals in monitoring.
- Use planting material from accredited nurseries.
- Avoid sharing equipment.
- Washes for footwear and vehicles.
- Have a visitor and staff register.
- Familiarise yourself with registered control options, including natural enemies.



Sooty mould – black fungal growth on surfaces contaminated with honeydew excreted by mealybugs.

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



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