

Colorado potato beetle

What is Colorado potato beetle?

The Colorado potato beetle (*Leptinotarsa decemlineata*) is a serious and persistent pest in temperate regions. In countries where it is established, it is both difficult and expensive to control, and insecticide resistance is a major issue.

The preferred host plants are potatoes, eggplant, capsicums and tomatoes. Adult beetles and larvae feed on stems, leaves and growing tips, and they produce a sticky black excrement.

What does it look like?

Adult beetles are about 1 cm in length and visible to the naked eye. They have five dark line markings on each wing cover, with a yellow to red underlying colour. They are found on stems and leaves, externally on fruit or tubers and sometimes in produce packed from infested fields.

The larvae are also brightly coloured and grow to 15 mm in length. Initially they are bright red with a black head and legs, but this changes to a pale orange before pupation.

What can it be confused with?

There are no beetles with similar morphology native to Australia.

Defoliation and leaf tatter caused by the Colorado potato beetle is similar to the damage caused by other insects, but the black sticky deposits help confirm the Colorado potato beetle is present.

What should I look for?

Leaf defoliation caused by Colorado beetle feeding is the most obvious sign of the pest's presence during in field inspections. Shake potato plants and observe the ground around them for beetles. Larvae and adults can be seen easily on young plants. Also check nearby Solanaceous weeds.



Adult beetles have distinctive dark lines on wing covers

David Cappaert, Michigan State University, Bugwood.org



Defoliation damage caused by Colorado potato beetle feeding

USDA APHIS PPO Archive, Bugwood.org



The larva is brightly coloured and has two rows of dark spots along each side

David Cappaert, Michigan State University, Bugwood.org



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The brightly coloured Colorado potato beetle eggs are laid in clumps on leaf surfaces



David Cappaert, Michigan State University, Bugwood.org

Beetles are yellow to red with dark markings and segmented antennae



Whitney Cramshaw, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org

Cream coloured pupa of the Colorado potato beetle

How does it spread?

The adults can fly short distances within a host crop and have been known to travel up to 160 km when assisted by strong winds.

The larvae and adults can be transported as ‘hitch-hikers’ on plant material, produce, machinery and packaging.

Where is it now?

Colorado potato beetle is widespread throughout Europe, Asia, Mexico and in the western USA. It has been eradicated from the UK and is contained within regions of Canada.

How can I protect my farm from Colorado potato beetle?

Do not plant tubers from unknown sources. Check your farm frequently for the presence of new pests and unusual symptoms. Make sure you are familiar with common pests of the vegetable industry so you can tell if you see something different.

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

**EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE
1800 084 881**



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