

Papaya mealy bug

What is the Papaya mealy bug?

Papaya mealy bug (*Paracoccus marginatus*) is a small oval-shaped sap-sucking insect. The bug causes damage to papaya plants and heavy infestations can cover a large proportion of the leaves. Feeding introduces a toxin into the plant that causes chlorosis, leaf distortions and early fruit fall. The bug also produces honey dew which can cause Sooty mould to develop reducing the quality of the fruit.

What does it look like?

The bug is approximately 2.2 mm long and 1.4 mm wide. It is a yellow colour but is usually covered in a white waxy substance. The bugs cluster and can be seen on the underside of papaya leaves and on fruit.

What can it be confused with?

Other mealy bugs can potentially be confused with this species, especially on alternative hosts. If you see any unusual symptoms or pests in your orchard, consult an agronomist or contact the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.

What should I look for?

To protect your orchard from Papaya mealy bug you should look for clusters of the white coloured insects on papaya plants. Also check any plants that show distorted leaves or chlorosis as these are symptoms of the pest feeding on the plant. When examining plants for Papaya mealy bug pay particular attention to the undersides of leaves and fruit as this is where the bugs often congregate.



Peggy Greb, USDA Agricultural Research Service, Bugwood.org

Adult Papaya mealy bug (note yellow body with white wax) and several nymphs (the smaller insects)



Dale E. Meyerdirk, USDA APHIS PPO, Bugwood.org

Heavy infestation of Papaya mealy bug on papaya fruit



Dale E. Meyerdirk, USDA APHIS PPO, Bugwood.org

Infestation of Papaya mealy bugs on the underside of a papaya leaf. Note how they cluster together to form a white mass



How does it spread?

In order to spread to your orchard the Papaya mealy bug has to enter the country and find your trees. The bug feeds on a variety of plants although it prefers papaya. It is possible that garden or papaya plants or plant products, from overseas could bring the pest into Australia. Visitors who have recently visited overseas papaya orchards could also accidentally bring the pest into Australia.

Where is it now?

Papaya mealy bug is found in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand. It is also found in parts of North and Central America including: USA (Florida and Hawaii), Mexico and various Caribbean countries. The pest also occurs in some West African countries such as Ghana.

How can I protect my orchard from Papaya mealy bugs?

Source plant material only from clean, accredited suppliers, and preferably obtain material that is certified. Check your orchard frequently for the presence of new pests and unusual symptoms. Make sure you are familiar with common Papaya insect pests 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**



Distorted leaves caused by Papaya mealy bugs feeding on the plant

Date E. Meyerdirk, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org



Papaya plant damaged by Papaya mealy bugs feeding on the plant. Note: chlorotic leaves

Date E. Meyerdirk, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org



Infected papaya plant

Date E. Meyerdirk, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org

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