

Cowpea Aphid (*Aphis craccivora* Koch)

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Young and adult cowpea aphids (*Aphis craccivora* Koch) (Homoptera: Aphididae) feed by sucking plant juices. Eggs develop within the mother and nymphs are born live. Within a few days, nymphs mature into reproductive adults and population density can increase very rapidly. In the early stages of an infestation, adult aphids have no wings, but as they become crowded, winged forms appear in subsequent generations and disperse to other plants. In the tropics these aphids reproduce without mating and colonies consist entirely of females. Aphids appear on crops soon after they are planted and disperse readily. They are found primarily on the growing points of the host plant, including tips, flowers and developing bean pods.

Cowpea aphids are known to transmit a number of plant viruses. They vector a virus which causes mosaic-like symptoms and results in yield loss on yardlong beans on Guam. Cowpea aphids have numerous hosts, but are primarily found on legumes. Crops likely to be affected in this region are various types of beans, including yardlong beans and winged beans.

Cowpea aphids are cosmopolitan and particularly well distributed in the tropics. Cowpea aphids are found on most islands in the American Pacific region.

Control

Cowpea aphids are eaten by a number of ladybeetles and syrphid fly larvae. Plants can support a fairly large number of aphids if the virus is not present. Where virus is a problem, or when aphids are numerous on the bean pods, insecticides may be used. Small parasitic wasps have also been introduced to the Mariana Islands that specifically attack and kill aphids, including cowpea aphid. Care should be taken not to use chemical sprays that



Aphids on bean plant.

would disrupt this biological control in areas where the aphid natural enemies have been introduced.

If the use of chemicals is required or if additional information is desired, consult an Extension Agent at your local land grant institution. On Guam, you may also consult the Guam Fruit and Vegetable Pesticide Guide for current recommendations and permissible uses.

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