

# Sweet potato weevil

## Recognize the problem

The sweet potato weevil feeds on the whole plant including the leaves and the stem, reducing sweet potato production.

The weevil leaves waste in the sweet potato, giving the crop a bitter taste.

Weevils also make holes in the potato, making the crop more difficult to sell because it looks ugly.

## Background

The weevil is an insect approximately the size of a grain of rice. It has a long nose, a metallic dark blue body and a red head with metallic blue horns. The weevil lives for about 110 days.

The weevil lays cream-coloured eggs. The eggs are individual, oval and are located in the roots, in the sweet potato and at the base of the stems. The eggs hatch into worms which are also cream-coloured. These worms immediately penetrate the sweet potato and the stems.

The weevil lives on volunteer plants and stubble. It also lives in morning glory, which belongs to the same family as sweet potato.

## Management

- Select healthy seeds, free of weevils
- Use certified pest-free seedlings or runners
- Sanitize the runners with a disinfectant insecticide for 10-15 minutes
- Remove volunteer plants and stubble, including the roots, and destroy them to kill the weevil eggs
- Build a mound of soil around the bottom of the plant, so that the adult will not enter the plant fissures when at bed closing
- Harvest the whole plot at once so that there are no plants that the weevil could continue living on
- Biological control: apply *Beauveria bassiana* (e.g. Botanigard 22WP): 400 grams per 200 liters of water
- Chemicals: thiamethoxam, e.g. Actara, can be applied at 125 to 250 grams per hectare but this chemical can harm beneficial insects
- Fipronil (e.g. Regent 20SC) can be applied: 1ml per liter, or Movento: 300 to 375 ml in 200 liters of water for one hectare. Apply it when you find more than 50 worms in a sample of 10 plants at random per hectare.

The adult weevil. (Photo by SENASA)



The worm which is born from the eggs laid by the weevil. (Photo by SENASA)



When using a pesticide, always wear protective clothing and follow the instructions on the product label, such as dosage, timing of application, and pre-harvest interval.

Scientific name(s) > *Cylas formicarius*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Honduras



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