

Weevil management in sweet potato

Recognize the problem

The sweet potato weevil is a major pest of sweet potato. It is 6-8 mm long and has a long pointed mouth. It is black with a small red-brownish part and can fly. Its young are worm-like larvae that can feed inside the tubers and make tunnels and holes. This causes the tubers to rot.

6 to 8 mm sweet potato weevil adult and 5 mm larva. (Photo by Graham Wise, CC BY)



Background

The adult weevils are seen when the crop is flowering. The females lay eggs in the stems or tubers of sweet potato. Larvae hatch from the eggs and feed on the tubers. The adult weevil moves from one field to another through tubers or stems that are already infested with weevils. Weevils also live in damaged tubers left in the field after harvesting.

Management

- Close soil cracks in the mounds of sweet potato by hoeing. This reduces the weevil attack because it prevents the weevil entering the deeper soil and sweet potatoes.
- Harvest sweet potato early, around 4-6 months after planting, to reduce the chance of weevil attack
- Remove the stems or remaining tubers from the field after harvest
- Clean up all remains of the old crop and destroy them, for example by feeding to cattle or burning. Do not store the remains near fields and do not bury the remains, because weevils can still survive.
- Crop rotation can also be practised by alternating sweet potato with rice or sorghum. This disturbs the life cycle of the weevil.
- Spraying insecticide on the ground is not effective because the chemical does not move into the soil to kill the weevils

6 to 8 mm sweet potato weevil adult and 5 mm larva. (Photo by Peter A.C. Ooi/CABI BioScience)



Scientific name(s) > *Cylas formicarius*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Zambia



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