

Farmer Fact Sheet 40: Pumpkin beetle



What is it?

It is a beetle that attacks crops in the cucurbit family: cucumber, melon, pumpkin, watermelon and gourds. It is known as the Plain or Red pumpkin beetle. In Solomon Islands, the colour of the beetle is orange and not red. The scientific name is *Aulacophora*.

What damage does it do?

Adult beetles (photo, left) lay eggs in or on the soil, or on the leaves. Cream-white young (called larvae) hatch and make their way to the roots, feeding on them until they change into pupae; later, they emerge as adults.

Adults feed on leaves, chewing large holes (photo, right). Seedlings are particularly susceptible to attack, as well as the flowers and small fruits. Roots are damaged by the larvae.

How do I identify it?

Look for orange, oval beetles about 8 mm long, often in groups on young and old leaves, and flying between them. Look for round holes in leaves made by the beetles as they feed.

How do I manage the pumpkin beetle?

Little is known about the natural control of these beetles. The beetles may be distasteful to general predators (birds and lizards) and avoided.

Cultural control:

- Avoid planting new crops next to those already infested with the beetles;
- Provide manure or fertilizer, mulches and water to encourage fast early growth;
- Plant fast-growing varieties that outgrow the damage caused by the beetles.

Chemical control:

- Use synthetic pyrethroid insecticides, such as lambda cyhalothrin or permethrin. READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE USE.