

Farmer Fact Sheet 25: Spiraling Whitefly

What is it?

It is a small insect that sucks the juice from plants. It looks like a small white butterfly or moth, but it belongs to a different group. And it is not a fly.

The whitefly feeds and breeds on many plants, including banana, capsicum, cassava, citrus, custard apple, eggplant, guava, mango, papaya, taro, tomato, ornamentals, shade trees and weeds. The scientific name is *Aleurodicus*.



What damage does it do?

The young and adults have long thin mouthparts, and use them to suck the juices from the leaves.

Damage occurs in two ways: first, the whiteflies feed on the leaves sucking their juices, and the leaves die early; second, fungi called sooty moulds grow on the honeydew - sugary substances that come out of whiteflies as they feed; the leaves turn black, and do not get enough sunlight, and growth is poor.



How do I identify it?

When female whiteflies lay eggs, they make spiraling patterns on the under surface of leaves (photo, top); these patterns give the insect its name. Also, look for adults on the undersides of leaves (photo, lower). They are small, white and like small moths.

Look for the whiteflies in the morning and evening. The whiteflies can be seen flying in large circles around their host plants. They can be made to fly by shaking the plant, and then they resettle quickly.

How do I manage spiraling whitefly?

A tiny wasp, too small to be seen by your eye, usually controls the whitefly. It lays its eggs inside the young whiteflies, killing them. Lacewings and ladybird beetles attack all stages. Usually, you have to do NOTHING, as natural control is excellent.

- DO NOT use insecticides. If you do, you will kill the tiny wasps and other insects that control the whiteflies, and make the situation worse;
- Also, if you do use insecticides, you might find that after a while they do not work as the whitefly has become resistant to them.