

Farmer Fact Sheet 32: Taro Hornworm



What is it?

It is an insect that feeds on the leaves of taro. It also eats the leaves of sweet potato and noni. The scientific name is *Hippotion*.

What damage does it do?

The caterpillars do the damage. Usually, they eat all the leaf except the main veins, but sometimes only the leaf stalks are left (photo, lower right). Outbreaks are not common as natural enemies give good control.

How do I identify it?

Look for leaves eaten between the veins (photo, left). The caterpillars can be found on leaves during the day. They are large (80-90 mm) with eyespots at the front, a line along the sides, and a horn at the rear (photo, top right). Adults have wingspans of 40-90 mm; they are streamline, with a large head and eyes (photo, below).

How do I manage taro hornworm?

Natural enemies – small wasps and flies - usually give good control, so do nothing.

Cultural Control:

- Handpick the caterpillars, if the garden is small;
- Allow chickens into the garden.

Chemical Control:

- Pesticides are not recommended, as they will kill egg and caterpillar parasites. If they are needed, it is best to use natural insecticides, such as chilli, derris, neem, pyrethrum, or those containing bacteria, such as spinosad (Success) and Bt – *Bacillus thuringiensis*.

