

Farmer Fact Sheet 41: Taro Plant Hopper



What is it?

It is an insect that has needle-like mouthparts and sucks the sap from taro leaves. It is found only on taro. The scientific name is *Tarophagus*.

What damage does it do?

Plant hoppers damages taro by: a) large numbers cause leaves to wilt, become stunted and die early (especially in dry times); this affects yield; b) spread Alomae and Bobone virus diseases.

How do I identify it?

Eggs are laid in leaf stalks and large veins. Look underneath the leaves and at the base of leaf stalks for adults and young (nymphs), white at first (1 mm), later brown and then black with white marks. Adults have short wings (photo, above right) or long wings, up to 4 mm (photo, lower right). Look for dirty marks on leaf stalks where they feed and lay eggs. As they walk, they move sideways; and they jump when disturbed.

How do I manage the plant hopper?

A red and black bug called *Cyrtorhinus* eats the eggs. However, fire ants protect plant hoppers from predators or beneficial insects such as *Cyrtorhinus*.

Cultural control:

- Avoid planting new crops next to those already infested with plant hoppers;
- Prepare “tops” for replanting by cutting off all leaves with dirty marks on them.

Chemical control:

- If no egg-eating bugs (*Cyrtorhinus*) are present use: a) synthetic pyrethroids, such as lambda cyhalothrin or cypermethrin; or b) imidacloprid. READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE USE. Consult your MAL extension officer for advice.