

Farmer Fact Sheet 19: Cassava Shoot Dieback



What causes it?

A large bug causes the dieback. It has a long, needle-like, mouth. It uses this to suck juices from stems and fruits. The scientific name is *Amblypelta*.

What damage does it do?

As the bug feeds, it injects a poison into the plant. Different plants develop different symptoms:

- On coconuts, the young fruit (or nuts) fall;
- On *Eucalyptus* and cassava, the shoots wilt and die, and dead woody areas called cankers develop on the stems (photo, left);
- On cocoa, the young pods (the cherelles) develop black sunken spots and become misshapen as they grow.

How do I identify it?

The bug has a pale green body, long legs, and pale brown wings (photo, right). The body is 20 mm long. It has a very long needle-like mouth, almost as long as its body. The young bugs look like the adults, except they are smaller.

How do I control the bug?

Natural control by ants occurs in Solomon Islands. *Wasmannia*, the fire ant from Papua New Guinea, controls the bug in coconuts. *Oecophylla*, the weaver ant, controls the bug in cocoa, so plant soursop between the rows of cocoa to attract them. Damage to cassava is usually quite low, so control measures are not worthwhile.