

# Bud moth

## Sugarcane bud moth

*Opogona glycyphaga*

## Distribution

Bud moth occurs throughout Queensland and northern New South Wales, but most frequent damage to cane occurs in the Herbert and Tully regions.

## Damage

Sugarcane bud moth is a minor pest. Caterpillars bore into and kill bud eyes, ruining sources of planting materials in susceptible varieties. Damaged buds are hollow.

Germination failures result from planting infested stalks. Caterpillars living on cane before planting stay underground on the setts and bore into shoots. They then cause 'dead heart' damage similar to wireworm damage.

## Description

Caterpillars are dull yellow with dark red-brown heads. The head and body are covered in hairs. Caterpillars are up to 16 mm long and have dark blotches towards the head and small dark spots on the sides. Caterpillars live behind the leaf sheath base on mature stems. They make rough shallow feeding scars on the inside of leaf sheaths and on the rind, and dig small entry holes at the tip of the bud or under the bud scale. Pupae are found under leaf sheaths in silken cocoons covered with debris.

Adult moths are 8 mm long with a shining purple head and thorax and yellow wings with purple tips. Moths rest with wings close to the body and antennae straight out in front (Photo 1).

## Biology

Moths probably breed all year, but large numbers of moths and caterpillars occur during autumn when most damage to eyes occurs.



**Photo 1:** Bud moth adult, pupa and caterpillar.

Caterpillars also bore into prop roots at the base of stools. They are also pests of bananas and granadillas.

## Management

There are no registered chemicals for control of this pest in sugarcane. Chemical control is not practical as sprays would have to be applied during the middle of the wet season. Stripping trash from plant sources may reduce damage to eyes.