

Planthopper

Sugarcane planthopper

Perkinsiella saccharicida

Distribution

Sugarcane planthopper occur in all cane areas. It is an important pest only where Fiji disease also occurs.

Damage

Nymphs and adults suck sap from the leaves, causing yellowing and mottling. Sooty mould grows on the honey-dew produced by planthoppers.

Sugarcane planthopper is the carrier (vector) of Fiji disease in Australia. Nymphs can get the Fiji disease virus only within a few days of hatching. Older nymphs and adults spread the virus.

Description

Adults are about 5 mm long and brown-black in colour. They are shaped like a stretched out triangle tapering towards the rear from a broad head (Photos). When approached, adults resting on a cane stalk will retreat rapidly to the other side of the stalk. Adults will often move sideways, giving them the common name of 'sidewinder'. Nymphs are plump, wingless mottled-brown insects. They go through five growth stages (instars).

Biology

Adults prefer the upper stalk where they hide and feed in the young leaf axils. Banana shaped eggs are laid mainly in the upper leaf midrib near the leaf axil, or in leaf sheaths. Upon hatching young nymphs move down the stalk to behind the leaf sheaths. Older nymphs are found on or near the leaf spindle.

Planthopper numbers increase rapidly in summer with nymph numbers peaking in January-February and adults in February-March. Adults can swarm in large numbers in late summer and are strongly attracted to lights. Planthoppers are not common in fields between May and November.

Photos: Sugarcane planthoppers.



Management

Resistant sugarcane varieties give good control of Fiji disease. Egg predators and parasitoids help reduce planthopper numbers in summer.