

Whitefringed weevil

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Naupactus leucoloma

Distribution

Originally from South America, whitefringed weevil occurs in all canegrowing areas.

Damage

Adult weevils chew the leaves of cane, but rarely cause any economic damage. Grubs attack the roots of germinating setts or ratoons, causing the plant to die or become very weak. Damage often follows legume cover crops or fallows with large numbers of legume weeds.

Description

Grubs are short, fat, legless, and grow to 15 mm long. They are white with pale yellow heads and black mouthparts.

The adult weevil is 12 mm long with a short 'snout'. It is light brown with a white line on the outer edge of each wingcover (Photo 1). Adults lack hindwings and cannot fly.

Biology

All whitefringed weevils in Australia are females. Adults are present throughout summer and autumn. Eggs are laid during this period in batches of 12-60 attached to plant stems, dead leaves or stones. Each female can lay up to 1500 eggs. Eggs hatch in 2-4 weeks in summer and autumn but take up to 3 months in winter. Grubs take 6-18 months to develop, depending on food supply. Adults emerge from the pupal chamber after rain. Adults cannot fly, but can move easily into nearby crops. Adults lay more eggs and grubs grow faster and survive better when feeding on legumes rather than grasses.

Insects rarely persist for more than one generation in weed-free canefields.



Photo 1: Whitefringed weevil adult.

Management

Damage by whitefringed weevil is rarely of economic importance. No insecticide is registered for use against the pest in sugarcane.