

## **New Guinea Sugarcane Weevil (*Rhabdoscelus obscurus* Boisduval)**

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The larvae of the New Guinea sugarcane weevil, *Rhabdoscelus obscurus* Boisduval and *Rhabdoscelus asperpennis* (Fairmaire) (Coleoptera: Curculionidae) tunnel in the interior of their host plants. The larvae are white, legless grubs, rather oval in shape. Their tunnel is usually blocked at the entrance by a plug of plant fibers. They pupate inside



Adult beetle



Betelnut palm damaged by weevils

the cavity they have excavated in a cocoon of fragments of soft bark and fiber. In sugarcane growing regions they are important pests of that crop, boring in the stems and causing substantial losses. In coconuts they bore in the base of the trunk and can weaken the tree until it is blown down in high winds. In betelnut they frequently bore near the growing tip of the tree and can kill the tree. *Rhabdoscelus obscurus* is present throughout most of Micronesia and in Hawaii. It is found in sugarcane, coconut, betelnut and occasionally papaya. *R. asperipennis* is present only in Palau. Its only recorded host is coconut.

### **Control**

When these insects are damaging coconut or betelnut, larvae in tunnels may be destroyed by placing flakes of the mothball Para-dichloro-benzene (PDB) in the hole and then sealing it. The fumigant action of the mothballs kills the larvae and adults in the tunnel. In Hawaii and other regions where there is extensive sugarcane and widespread presence of the host, a parasite *Lixophaga sphenophori*

(Villeneuve) has been introduced and successfully reduces beetle numbers. If the use of chemicals is required or if additional information is desired, consult an Extension Agent at your local land grant institution. In Guam, you may also consult the Guam Fruit and Vegetable Pesticide Guide for current recommendations and permissible uses.

\* Replaces Agricultural Pests of the Pacific Series, ADAP 90-4.



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Funded by the United States Department of Agriculture Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service Grant 99-38826-7854  
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Publishing and conversion into digital format made possible by funding from  
USDA Western SARE PEOPLE Project, Utah State Subcontract #C019211,  
Project #EW98011.