

# Cotton Seed Bug (*Oxycarenus hyalinipennis*)

The cotton seed bug is a pest of cotton and other members of the Malvaceae plant family. This pest has a worldwide distribution, excluding most of North America. Present in the West Indies since the early 1990s, the first U.S. detection of the cotton seed bug occurred in Puerto Rico in January 2010. In March 2010, the cotton seed bug was found in the Florida Keys, which signified the first detection in the continental United States. It was later detected in April 2010 in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

## Description

**Adults:** Black with translucent white wings, with males being slightly smaller than females.

**Eggs:** Oval, less than 1 millimeter in size.

**Life Cycle:** Five nymphal instars, which have pink to red abdomens. Generation from egg to adult can be



USDA/APHIS, Julieta Brambila

Figure 1. Adult cotton seed bug

completed in 20 days, with three to four generations per year. The last generation undergoes an inactive, dormant phase (aestivation).

**Where To Look:** Crevices in tree trunks, telephone poles, or wooden posts; undersides of tree leaves; pods of legumes; dried flower heads; grass roots; under sheath leaves of corn and sugarcane; and on the leaves of mango, guava, and citrus plants.

## Detection Strategies

Establishing sentinel survey sites, a fixed site with host plants that is visited repeatedly to inspect for the presence of a target pest, is an effective way to detect the presence of the cotton seed bug. Areas with large populations of easily accessible host plants make optimal sentinel survey sites. For the cotton seed bug, effective sites include agricultural fields where okra is produced and natural areas where wild cotton grows.



USDA/APHIS, Karolyne Griffiths

Figure 2. Cotton seed bugs in mature boll



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**Figure 3.** Adult cotton seed bug on okra



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**Figure 4.** Adult cotton seed bug in a cotton ball

For more information about what to look for when surveying for this pest, consult the *Field Screening Aid for the Cotton Seed Bug* developed by USDA's Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey program. You can download a copy of this publication online at [http://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/screening/oxycarenius\\_hyalinipennis](http://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/screening/oxycarenius_hyalinipennis).

### Report Your Findings

Proper identification of the cotton seed bug is important, as the pest can be confused easily with several closely related species of *Oxycarenius*. **If you find an insect that you suspect is the cotton seed bug, please contact your local extension office or State Plant Regulatory Official** to have the specimen identified properly. Contact information is available online at [www.nifa.usda.gov/Extension/](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/Extension/) and [www.nationalplantboard.org/member/index.html](http://www.nationalplantboard.org/member/index.html).

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