

Rhynchophorus ferrugineus (Olivier)

Rhynchophorus ferrugineus commonly known as the red palm weevil is recognized as the most serious and destructive pest of palm species (Arecaceae). The red palm weevil is reddish brown, about 35 × 10 mm long, with a long curved rostrum; dark spots on upper side of thorax; head and rostrum comprising about one third of total length.

It has been reported on 19 palm species belonging to 15 different genera. It has also been recorded on century plants (*Agave americana*).

The red palm weevil is native to southern Asia and Melanesia. Accidentally introduced it has spread through the Middle East and the Mediterranean where it has severely damaged commercial and ornamental palm trees. The weevil was recently reported in the Caribbean on Curacao and Aruba, most likely to have introduced on ornamental Phoenix palms imported from Egypt (Roda *et al* 2011)

The red palm weevil affects the stems and growing points of the host palm. It is very difficult to detect the weevil in the early stages of infestation. Generally, it is detected only after the palm has been severely damaged. If observed carefully the following signs may be indicative of its presence: holes in the crown or trunk from which chewed-up fibers are ejected (this may be accompanied by the oozing of brown viscous liquid); crunching noise produced by the feeding grubs can be heard when the ear is placed to the trunk



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of the palm; withered bud/crown. The use of bioacoustic sensors is being considered for early detection of this pest, because larvae activity is audible while they excavate tunnels to feed.

Emphasis is generally placed on preventive measures. The Integrated Pest Management programme includes: surveillance; trapping the weevil using pheromones lures; cultural measures such as plant and field sanitation; physical methods (preventing entry of weevils through cut ends of petioles and wounds; use of attractants and other chemicals (including filling of leaf axils with lindane and sand as a preventive measure).

References:

Global Invasive Species Database (2011) *Rhynchophorus ferrugineus* (Olivier) [\[link\]](#)

Roda, A.; Kairo, M.; Damian, T.; Franken, F.; Heidweiller, K.; Johanns, C.; Mankin, R. (2011) Red palm weevil (*Rhynchophorus ferrugineus*), an invasive pest recently found in the Caribbean that threatens the region. Bulletin OEPP. 41(2). AUG 2011. 116-121.



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