

DERMOLEPIDA
ALBOHIRTUM

GREYBACK ACK CANEGRUB

HISTORY

Greyback canegrub is native to Australia. It is the most damaging pest of Australian sugarcane. It has been a pest in sugarcane from Mackay north, on a wide range of soil types since the 1870s.

IDENTIFICATION

Beetles (figure 1) are up to 35 mm long with wingcovers coloured grey by a coating of scales. They develop dark brown patches as the scales wear off.

Greyback larvae (figure 2) have two almost straight rows of 20-28 short hairs on their undersurface at the rear end of the grub (figure 3).



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

LIFECYCLE

Greybacks have a 1-year life cycle (figure 4) Beetles emerge after good rains between October and February. They fly after dark to feed on trees, particularly figs, wattles, palms, jackfruit and bananas. After feeding for a period of 10-14 days, they mate. The beetles are attracted to light. Females return to the soil before daybreak and lay 20-30 eggs in one clutch, 20-45 cm deep in the soil. They can lay up to three clutches of eggs.

After 2 weeks the eggs hatch. First stage grubs feed for 4 weeks on organic matter and roots, usually close to the surface. Second stage grubs gather under cane stools and feed on roots for 5 weeks. Third stage grubs feed heavily on the roots and stools and grow rapidly during February to May when they cause most damage. After 3-4 months, fully fed grubs burrow down and form chambers in the soil.

Grubs turn into pupae between July and October and beetles develop within 1 month. Beetles remain in the chamber until suitable weather conditions trigger their emergence.

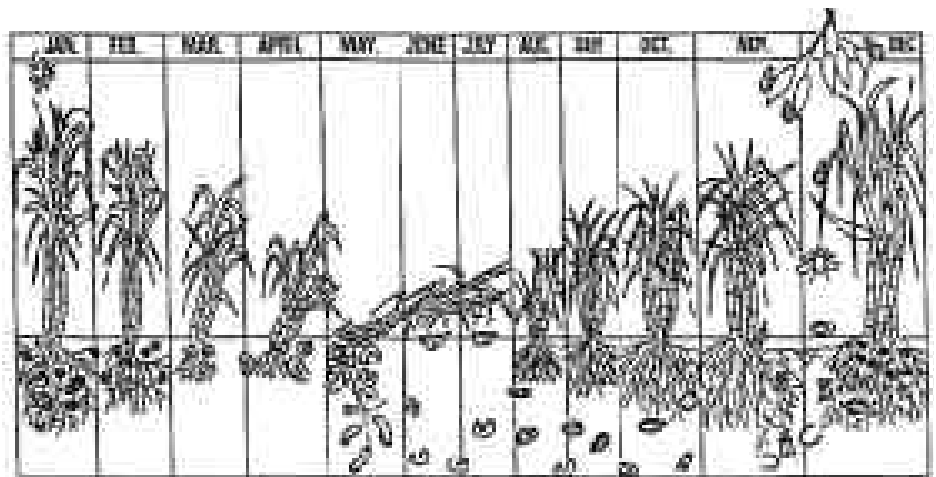


Figure 4

DAMAGE

Feeding greyback larvae prune sugarcane roots from February to May. This root damage results in reduced growth, lodging, stool tipping and sometimes death of the plant. Damaged stools may be lost at harvest and fail to ratoon.