

Mealybugs

Recognize the problem

Mealybugs are sucking pests about 3-5 mm in length. They are soft, long, egg-shaped and somewhat flat. A mealybug is often surrounded by a "cotton wool" like mass. Black, sooty mold is usually seen growing on the honeydew substance secreted by the mealybug.

After the adult mealybugs have established on the plant, their young move around, further infesting the plant. Mealybugs attack fruits and foliage of crops such as mango and passion fruit.

Background

Mealybugs prefer warm and humid conditions especially when the plants are closely planted or where a lot of shading occurs. They spread by crawling from branch to branch, by wind, on bird's feet, on machinery or on people working in the farm.

Mealy bugs can be eaten or killed by a wide range of natural enemies.

Management

Non chemical Control

- Conserve natural enemies that eat the mealybugs such as the ladybird beetle.
- Proper training and pruning of the vines will help light get into the plant and this destroys the shaded environment in which they multiply.
- Maintain field hygiene for example by properly destroying affected old crop.

Chemical control

- White oil sprays reduce mealybugs
- Using pesticides is often difficult because some mealybugs are hidden in their cotton wool like mass and may not get into contact with the spray.
- Sometimes pesticides kill natural enemies leading to outbreaks. Careful use of insecticides is necessary.
- Some of the pesticides include Buprofezin, Azadirachtin and Pyrethrin extract.
- Lambda-Cyhalothrin and Chlorpyrifos will kill mealybugs, but will also kill their natural enemies so these are not recommended.

Mealybugs on Passion fruit leaf.
(Photo by Kengap Horticulture)



When using a pesticide, always wear protective clothing and follow the instructions on the product label, such as dosage, timing of application, and pre-harvest interval.

Scientific name(s) > **Pseudococcidae, e.g. *Planococcus* spp.**

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: many countries where this pest or problem is present



Authors: This factsheet is based on information written for "The Passion Fruit Farming Handbook", first published by KENGAP HORTICULTURE, 2011.
Kengap Horticulture Ltd, P.O Box 12898-00400 Nairobi, Kenya
tel: +254 722 575544; +254 723 491549 email: books@kengap.co.ke;
www.kengap.co.ke

Edited by Plantwise