

● Potato and tomato psyllid (*Bactericera cockerelli*)

ADULT



Image courtesy of Whitney Cranshaw, Louisiana State University.
www.forestryimages.org

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ADULT



The adult potato and tomato psyllid is a clear-winged insect around 3 mm in length. It resembles a tiny cicada.

Adult psyllids change colour as they age, from light yellow (immediately after emergence) through to grey / black after around five days. Mature adults have white stripes. Like psyllid nymphs, adults are sucking feeders. They fly away quickly when disturbed.

Adult psyllids can be detected on yellow sticky traps.

Acknowledgements: Poster and information cards produced by Market Access Solutionz for the Fresh Tomato, Fresh Vegetable and Potato Product Groups. Thanks to Stephen McKennie of Veg-Gro Supplies Ltd for arranging the supply of several of the images used.

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EGG



Image courtesy of Jack Kelly Clark, University of California

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EGG



Potato and tomato psyllid eggs are attached to the leaf by a short stalk, and are often laid along the edge of leaves. The eggs are oblong in shape and are a shiny yellow. They become orange as the embryo develops.

Female psyllids can lay up to 500 eggs over the course of their life, with the life cycle completed in around four weeks. Numbers can build up rapidly in warm conditions.

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NYMPH



Photo by Ward Stepman, BCP Ltd

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Potato and tomato psyllid nymphs are approximately 2mm in length and are generally found feeding on the underside of leaves. They may be mistaken for scale insects or a large whitefly scale, but they may move a few millimetres if disturbed – note that movement may only be seen when using a hand lens. When examined closely a fringe of spines is visible around the edge of the nymph.

While feeding the nymphs secrete honeydew and this is deposited as a granular, sugar-like substance. Plants may be sticky and appear dirty. Nymphs also inject saliva into the plant, which can significantly slow plant growth and cause “psyllid yellows”. This is systemic but is non-infectious, and can reduce yields by up to 80%.

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SYMPTOMS



Photo by Ward Stepman, BCP Ltd.



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SYMPTOMS



The granular, sugar-like substance pictured here is secreted by feeding psyllid nymphs. Even a small number of nymphs can produce a large amount of honeydew so this may be the most obvious indication of psyllid infestation. This may be noticed well before damage symptoms are seen.

When nymphs feed they inject saliva into the plant, causing “psyllid yellows”. This stunts plant growth and can reduce yields by up to 80%. The first symptoms are yellowing of the edges of young leaves together with an upward cupping of the leaves which becomes more pronounced with time. Leaves can develop dead patches, and stem elongation may be reduced.

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