

Chilli thrips

Scirtothrips dorsalis

Crops affected: Capsicum, Chilli, Eggplant, Tomato

What is it?

A pest thrips species that feeds on more than 100 plant species from around 40 different families including solanaceous crops, **tomato, capsicum, chilli**, and **eggplants**.

What does it look like?

Chilli thrips are extremely small insects that often go undetected. Adults are around 2 mm, pale white to yellow in colour with dark, fringed wings (Fig 1). Immature stages (larvae and pupae) are also pale in colour and are without wings (Fig 2). Eyes are coloured red. The chilli thrips resembles many other thrips species.

What should I look for?

Chilli thrips feed on buds, flowers, fruits, and the lower surface of leaves. Adults and larvae feed on the underside of young leaves by piercing the plant tissue and sucking the released juices. The leaves may show signs of leaf curl (Fig 3). A heavy infestation causes premature wilting, delay in leaf development and distortion of leaves and young shoots, and the buds and flowers usually die. Infestation may also result in premature fruit fall and can damage the fruit (Fig. 4 and 5). Chilli thrips can also vector diseases.

How does it spread?

Chilli thrips are dispersed via infested plant material – cut flowers, fruits and vegetables. Wind currents may also contribute to the dispersal of adult thrips.

Why is it important?

Chilli thrips have a very wide host range which includes fruit, vegetable and ornamental crops. Feeding by chilli thrips is reported to cause significant damage, which can increase if it is a vector of viruses that cause significant disease or host plant death.

Where is it present?

Chilli thrips are widespread across Asia and are present in Papua New Guinea (native), Solomon Islands (native), New Caledonia, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Israel, Iran, parts of Africa (Egypt, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania), North, Central and South America, and Australia.

How can I protect my industry?

Check your production site frequently for the presence of new pests and unusual symptoms. Make sure you are familiar with common pests of your industry so you can recognise something different.



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Fig 1. Chilli thrips male adult. Photo credit: Lance Osborne, University of Florida



Fig 2. Chilli thrips larvae. Photo credit: Vivek Kumar – University of Florida



Fig 3. Signs of damage on capsicum plant. Photo credit: Plantix.net



Fig 4. Thrips damage on tomato. Photo credit: Infonet.biovision



Fig 5. Signs of damage on capsicum fruit. Photo credit: Plantix.net