

Red spider mite

Tetranychus evansi

Crops affected: Capsicum, Eggplant, Tomato

What is it?

Red spider mites prefer solanaceous crops, affecting **tomato, eggplant, capsicum**, and potato. Its small size makes it difficult to detect, and it could easily be confused with other spider mites which may already be present in New Zealand.

What does it look like?

Adult female Red spider mites are 0.5 mm long, oval-shaped, orange-red coloured with an indistinct dark blotch on each side of the body (Fig 1). They can lay up to 200 eggs. Males are smaller and straw to orange coloured. Their development is favoured by hot dry conditions, and their life cycle is completed in 13.5 days.

What should I look for?

Damage is mainly to the leaves of host plants. Feeding punctures created by the mites lead to whitening or yellowing of leaves (Fig 2 & 3), followed by desiccation, and eventually defoliation. In cases of severe attack, plants may die. An indication of a Red spider mite infestation is the presence of webbing on the underside of the leaf (Fig 4 & 5), and in severe cases envelops parts of the plant.

How does it spread?

Over short distances, mites can spread by wind, irrigation water, and on clothing and tools. On plants, mites can disperse by walking. Long distance spread can occur via movement of host plants. Its small size and similarity with other spider mite species makes it difficult to detect on consignments. Mites can be spread on the fruit of host plants, including tomatoes “on the vine”, on Solanaceae plants, and as a hitchhiker on non-solanaceous plants.

Why is it important?

Red spider mites infest the leaves of host plants and can cause loss of yield. The pest does not directly affect fruit quality except for heavy infestations. Eradication can be difficult.

Where is it present?

Red spider mites originate from South America and were accidentally introduced to other parts of the world. It is now present in Africa, North and South America, Caribbean, Europe and Mediterranean countries, China, Japan, Taiwan, and Australia, and in New Zealand, where two small populations were reported in the South Auckland area.

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. Male (top) and female (bottom) Red spider mite. Photo credit: Alain Migeon, CBGP – INRA, Monferrier-sur-Lez, France.



Fig 2. Red spider mite infested leaf. Photo credit: Alain Migeon, CBGP – INRA, Monferrier-sur-Lez, France



Fig 3. Chlorotic spots on eggplant leaves. Photo credit: [Ephytia Inrae](#)

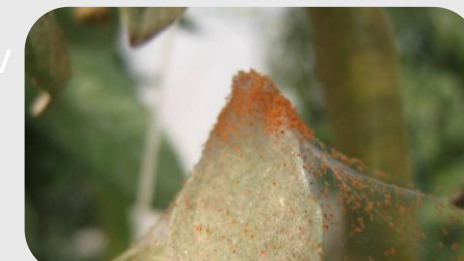


Fig 4. Red spider mite webbing around a leaf. Photo credit: Alain Migeon, CBGP – INRA, Monferrier-sur-Lez, France



Fig 5. Red spider mite infested fruit. Photo credit: Alain Migeon, CBGP – INRA, Monferrier-sur-Lez, France.