

Disease Profile

Common name	Fig psyllid	Family	Homotomidae
Genus/species	<i>Mycopsylla fici</i>	Order	Hemiptera
Pest/disease type	Sap sucking insect that causes defoliation		
Host	<i>Fig sp</i> , particularly <i>F. Macrophylla</i> and <i>F. rubiginosa</i>		
Symptoms	This psyllid creates a sticking covering (lerp) made from the latex excreted from the damaged leaf. The lerp protects them from weather and natural enemies. The lerp can be quite large and can stick to people or animals and subsequently spread to other locations. These insects can cause minor to major defoliation. In early formation of the lerp rain can cause the solution to run over the leaf causing further damage to the leaf.		
Identifying features/ Life cycle	<p>Eggs: small orange –brown eggs approx. 0.5mm in diameter and in clusters of up to 50 along the margin of the leaflet. Sometimes they made be found near the midrib</p> <p>Nymphs: are wingless are move only a short distance from the egg where they start to feed in groups. The formation of the protective lerp occurs at this time by excreting honeydew and two wax like filaments that captures the honeydew and forms the lerp. Nymphs have several instars; it is not until the final instar where they leave the lerp. They undergo the final moult and form wings and fly off to mate.</p> <p>Adult: are winged insects which predominately mate and lay eggs before their death.</p>		
Control options			
Environmental controls	Rain or overhead irrigation whilst lerp are being developed may provide some limited control.		
Biological controls	Young nymphs are parasitised by a native wasp, <i>Psyllaephagus</i> sp. It is important to leave fallen and infected foliage as mulch so that emerging wasps can continue to paratise more nymphs. Lacewing and ladybird larvae feed on nymphs. Birds particularly swallows are known to predate on adults as well as web spinning spiders.		
Chemical control	A broad spectrum contact insecticide should not be used as it will have a devastating affect on Beneficial's. A systemic insecticide used a soil drench or injection will need to be used as the lerp protects the insects from contact insecticides.		



References:

http://www.rbg Syd.nsw.gov.au/plant_info/pests_diseases/fact_sheets/fig_psyllids , accessed 10/1/12

Jones and Elliot.1990, Pests, Diseases and Ailments of Australian plants

All images and text by Shaun Talent