



Pests

Common foliar pests

Introduction

Sugar beet crops can be affected by a range of foliar pests throughout the growing season. While some pests cause direct feeding damage to leaves, others can reduce crop vigour, slow canopy development, or increase stress during critical growth periods. The significance of individual pests varies from year to year and is heavily influenced by weather conditions, crop growth stage, and local pest pressure.

Capsids

When: May to August

Symptoms: Capsids feed by piercing plant tissue and sucking sap from the central vein of leaves creating a small bite mark. The leaf top will then turn yellow which is often mis-diagnosed as virus

Risk: Little risk to crop, plants will normally grow away from damage

Severity: Not known to cause severe damage

Advice: Beneficial insects are known to suppress populations



Figure 1. Capsid

Beet flea beetle

When: March to May

Symptoms: Small black to bronze beetles (up to 2mm long) can be found on young seedlings, causing feeding damage to cotyledons or characteristic 'shot-holing' to young leaves

Risk: Poses more of a threat in dry, cool conditions when plant growth is slowed

Severity: Young plants are most at risk, while established plants will usually outgrow any damage

Advice: Good weed control and general on-farm hygiene will help to limit infestations. Crop is likely to recover without intervention

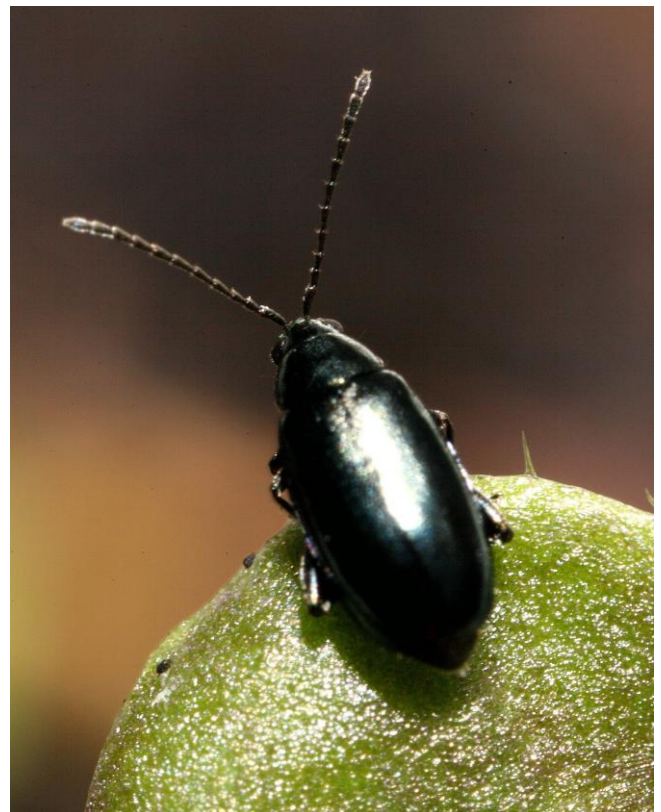


Figure 2. Beet Flea Beetle

Red spider mite/ two-spotted spider mite

When: July to September

Symptoms: Can create pale yellow speckling on leaves and mottled appearance as feeding damage increases. Mites can be found on underside of leaves and can be identified as 0.5mm, brown-red mites with two dark spots on the body

Risk: Most often seen in hot, dry weather and where crop is suffering from drought stress

Severity: Where infestations are high a fine webbing will be visible on leaf surfaces, this can limit photosynthesis and can cause leaf death

Advice: No established threshold, pyrethroids can be used in severe cases but for the most part beneficial insects will provide natural control. Plants will recover from damage later in the season



Figure 3. Red spider mite

Silver Y moth

When: June to September

Symptoms: The moth itself does not damage the crop, but it's green caterpillars can feed heavily on sugar beet leaves causing significant leaf damage

Risk: Damage most likely when large numbers of caterpillars are present during warm seasons, leading to multiple generations

Severity: Silver Y moth is an occasional but potentially damaging pest. Severe infestations can skeletonise leaves reducing photosynthesis and therefore yield

Advice: Beneficial insects such as parasitic wasps offer good control. Avoid using pyrethroids during early summer as this will have a detrimental impact on aphid predators and VY control. Consider using a targeted insecticide for moths if high levels of damage are seen



Figure 4. Silver Y caterpillar



Figure 5. Silver Y moth