

Pacific Pests, Pathogens and Weeds - Online edition

Cucumber moth (033)

Summary

- Worldwide distribution. In tropics and sub-tropics. On cucurbits; common cucurbits are watermelon, cucumber, melon, pumpkin and snake gourd. An important pest.
- Eggs are laid in small groups on the buds or flowers. The larvae hatch, feed on growing tips of new leaves, roll the leaves, fasten them with silk, and eat them between the veins. Young fruits are attacked.
- Natural enemies: parasitoid wasps; lacewing, ladybird beetle, hoverfly larvae.
- Cultural control: check regularly for infestations (rolled leaves, droppings), and squeeze exposed larvae (mostly on underside of leaves) and those in rolled leaves between finger and thumb.
- Chemical control: PDPs: chilli, derris, pyrethrum, or neem; use Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), or spinosad (or spinetorum), but best on young larvae. Avoid synthetic pyrethroids, if possible.

Common Name

Cucumber moth. Other common names are, melon moth, pumpkin caterpillar, cucurbit caterpillar, watermelon worm. In Southeast Asia, it is known as the white cucumber moth, with WCM as the acronym.

Scientific Name

Diaphania indica. A moth of the Crambidae.



Photo 1. Severe damage on cucumber by *Diaphania indica*. This is the damage done by the early larval stages.



Photo 2. Caterpillar of *Diaphania indica* exposed on a watermelon leaf that it has rolled.



Photo 4. Pupa of *Diaphania indica*. (This pupa has been parasitised.)



Photo 3. Caterpillar of *Diaphania indica* showing the characteristic double white lines along its back.

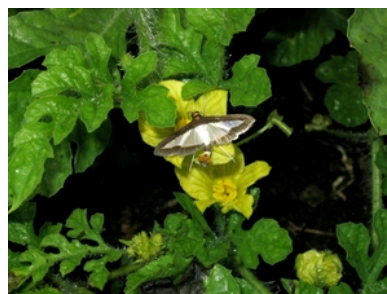


Photo 5. Adult *Diaphania indica*. Note the black border to the wings.



Photo 6. A lacewing. The larvae of this insect attack the young caterpillars of *Diaphania* (see Photo 7).



Photo 7. Larvae of green lacewing.



Photo 8. Larvae of predatory ladybird beetle.



Photo 9. Larvae of hoverflies; hoverflies are also called syrphid flies.



Photo 10. Unknown parasitoid wasp emerged from pupa shown in Photo 4.

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Information from Everatt et al. (2015) Cucurbit moths *Diaphania* species. Plant Pest Fact Sheet. Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. (<https://planthealthportal.defra.gov.uk/assets/factsheets/diaphania-indica-nitidalis-hyalinata.pdf>); and CABI (2020) *Diaphania indica* (cucumber moth). Crop Protection Compendium. (<https://www.cabi.org/cpc/datasheet/19657>); and from Walker K (2007) Cucumber moth (*Diaphania indica*): PaDIL - <http://www.padil.gov.au>; *Diaphania indica* (2020) Wikipedia. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diaphania_indica). Photo 3 Wilco Liebrechts, Ecoconsult, Fiji. Photos 4&5 Gerald McCormack, Cook Islands Biodiversity & Natural Heritage: (<http://cookislands.bishopmuseum.org/>). Photo 7 Whitney Cranshaw, Bugwood.org. Photo 8 Suzanne Neave, CABI, UK.

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