

Pacific Pests, Pathogens and Weeds - Online edition

Taro Papuana beetle (030)

Summary

- Narrow distribution. Indonesia, Oceania. On taro, seedlings of oil palm and coconut, giant taro, banana, giant swamp taro, sugarcane, *Pandanus*. An important pest.
- Adult beetles do the damage by boring into the corm. Males are first to arrive awaiting females. After mating, females leave to lay eggs in organic matter.
- Worse where forest disturbed by logging or cyclones.
- Cultural control: destruction of breeding sites suggested, but difficult to find; alternatively, grow a legume cover crops, e.g., *Mucuna*, *Pueraria*, *Glycine*, slash (or use herbicide) to kill it, and then plant taro into the mulch.
- Chemical control: imidacloprid or the pyrethroid cypermethrin at planting, and 3 months.

Common Name

Taro beetle, Papuana beetle

Scientific Name

Papuana species. There are 18 species in Papua New Guinea, 11 of which damage taro; common species are: *Papuana woodlarkiana*, *Papuana huebneri*, *Papuana trinodosa*, *Papuana biroi*, *Eucopidocaulus tridentipes* and *Papuana szentivanyi*.

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Information from Carmichael A, et al. (2008) TaroPest: an illustrated guide to pests and diseases of taro in the South Pacific. ACIAR Monograph No. 132, 76 pp. (<https://lrd.spc.int/about-lrd/lrd-project-partners/taropest>); and Carmichael A. (2005) Taro beetle (*Papuana woodlarkiana*). PaDIL - <http://www.padil.gov.au>; and from CABI (2019) *Papuana huebneri* (taro beetle). Invasive Species Compendium. (<https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/38792>). Photo 2 Graham Teakle, Canberra. Photo 3 Sada N Lala Taro beetle management in Papua New Guinea and Fiji. Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

Produced with support from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research under project PC/2010/090: *Strengthening integrated crop management research in the Pacific Islands in support of sustainable intensification of high-value crop production*, implemented by the University of Queensland and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community.



Photo 1. Extensive and typical damage caused by taro beetles, *Papuana* sp., in taro corms. These corms are unmarketable.



Photo 2. Damage in a taro corm due to the feeding of taro beetles, *Papuana* sp.



Photo 3. Adult taro beetle, *Papuana* sp. The beetle is about 20 mm long.

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