

Pandanus leaf webworm (389)

Common Name

Pandanus leaf webworm

Scientific Name

Aeolarchis sphenotoma. It was known previously as *Erechthias fibrivora*, and before that *Decadarchis fibrivora*, the name under which it was described. It is a moth of the Tineidae, fungus moths.

Distribution

Not known precisely. It has been recorded from Fiji where it is endemic. There is scant literature on this moth. Swaine (1970)¹ says that he did not find it in American Samoa or (Western) Samoa.

Hosts

Pandanus caricosus and *Pandanus thurstoni*. The local name is *voivoi* or *kieke*.

Symptoms & Life Cycle

The larvae or caterpillars do the damage. The larvae web the young leaves together at the tips and feed inside on the outer layers (Photo 1). As the leaves mature, the affected areas become silvery and withered.

The mature larva is about 16 mm long, with a flattened yellow body and red-brown head (Photo 2). The pupa is 9 mm long, red-brown and slightly flattened inside a tough, parchment-like oval cocoon, which is bordered by a crescent-shaped mass of chewed plant tissue and attached to the inside of the webbed leaf (Photo 3).

The adult is 9 mm long and light-brown (Photo 4). The forewings are golden-brown with a V-shaped cream patch; the hindwings are dull-brown, pointed and lightly fringed with thick hairs.

Impact

A serious pest which can cause extensive damage to the leaves. *Pandanus caricosus* and *Pandanus thurstoni* are important species in Fiji used for making mats, baskets, fans and other handicrafts. Of the two, *Pandanus caricosus* is considered the best. It is also said to be used to treat diarrhoea.

Detection & inspection

Look for the damaged leaves, and the larvae with yellow body and red-brown head.

Management

CULTURAL

During growth:

- Cut off the tips of the leaves that are webbed together and destroy them.

CHEMICAL CONTROL

- Use any of the following (PDPs, botanicals) insecticides against lepidoptera larvae: chilli, pyrethrum or derris if natural supplies are available (**see Fact Sheet no. 56**).
- Use a commercial microbial insecticide against lepidoptera larvae: Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), spinosad or the chemically related spinetoram (*Success*).
- Use synthetic pyrethroids. However, these products are likely to kill any parasitoids if they are present and should be avoided, if possible.
- Spot-spraying damaged shoots should be sufficient. Avoid 'blanket' spraying entire trees.



Photo 1. Damage by the Pandanus leaf webworm, *Aeolarchis sphenotoma*.



Photo 2. Larva of the Pandanus leaf webworm, *Aeolarchis sphenotoma*.



Photo 3. Red-brown pupa, *Aeolarchis sphenotoma*, bordered by crescent-shaped mass of chewed leaf.



Photo 4. Adult Pandanus leaf webworm, *Aeolarchis sphenotoma*.

When using a pesticide, always wear protective clothing and follow the instructions on the product label, such as dosage, timing of application, and pre-harvest interval. **Recommendations will vary with the crop and system of cultivation. Expert advice on the most appropriate pesticide to use should always be sought from local agricultural authorities.**

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