

Bele (Abelmoschus) shoot borer (023)

Summary

- Worldwide distribution. On bele (*aibika*, *sliperi kabis*, island cabbage, *Abelmoschus manihot*), okra, ornamental *Hibiscus*, and tomato.
- Eggs laid singly; larvae hatch, bore into young stems and cause wilts.
- Natural enemies: lacewings, lady beetles, parasitoid wasps.
- Cultural control: grow crops during wet season when populations are lower; prune stems several centimetres below entry holes; after last harvest, pull out and burn the plants.
- Chemical control: PDPs (with soap): chilli, derris, pyrethrum, or neem; use biopesticides, e.g., Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), or spinosad, but best to spray young larvae; use synthetic pyrethroids, but more likely to kill natural enemies.

Common Name

Bele shoot borer, spotted bollworm, spiny bollworm

Scientific Name

Earias vittella



Photo 1. Caterpillar of *Earias vittella* in the stem of bele. Note it is brown with orange spots.



Photo 2. Stem of bele split open to show a caterpillar of *Earias vittella*, and the frass that it pushes out through the entrance hole.



Photo 4. Wilt of bele caused by *Earias vittella*.



Photo 3. Damage to okra (*Abelmoschus esculentus*) by the bele shoot borer, *Earias vittella*.



Photo 5. Wilt of bele caused by *Earias vittella*.



Photo 6. Hole in the stem of bele made by *Earias vittella* (beneath the thumb).



Photo 7. Adult beetle shoot borer, *Earias vittella*.

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Information from MAF Plant Health & Environment Laboratory (2011) Spotted Bollworm (*Earias vittella*); PaDIL - <http://www.padil.gov.au>; and from CABI (2019) *Earias vittella* Crop protection Compendium (<https://www.cabi.org/cpc/datasheet/20306>). Photos 4&5 Graham Teakle, Canberra.

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 Co2019) mmunity.

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