

Planting material clean from banana weevil

Recognize the problem

Banana production in Tanzania is threatened by an insect pest called the banana weevil. This 1 cm beetle is black, has malt-grey wings, and a long nose. The first attack symptom is death of the outermost leaf-sheath at the base of the banana tree. You may also find small feeding holes and feeding tunnels on the banana base. The plant grows slowly then the pest feeding leads to yellowing and wilting of banana leaves, and finally rotting of the stem.

Background

Adult banana weevils can live 2 or more years. Adults don't fly but walk short distances over the soil between banana plants. They lay eggs in small pits made into the stem of the banana. They particularly like to lay eggs into any cut stems, rhizomes or other banana residues. The eggs hatch into larvae. The larvae are white, legless grubs that are ½ to 1 cm long. For 3 weeks, the larvae feed and bore tunnels in the rhizome, stem, suckers and roots. Larvae develop into pupae which are white with no cocoon. In serious cases larvae can cause splitting or snapping of the banana tree at ground level resulting in total yield loss. Detached suckers for planting material are especially vulnerable for weevil attack. Therefore, cleaning of planting materials is important.

Management

- Use planting material from plantation blocks or nurseries that are free of the weevil
- Clean plant materials by paring (cutting off) the plant layers to search for infestation symptoms. Remove plant layers by peeling them off with a knife/panga.
- Avoid using dirty knives/pangas that have been used to chop off infested plant parts because you may transfer weevil eggs
- Alternatively, use planting materials that have been grown by tissue cultures in institutes. Please contact Horticultural Unit at Sokoine University of Agriculture in Morogoro, Tanzania

Adult banana weevil and larva.
(Photo by Queensland Government)



Stem damaged by banana weevil.
(Photo by A. M. Varela, icipe)



Scientific name(s) > *Cosmopolites sordidus*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Tanzania



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