

EXOTIC PEST FACT SHEET 2

Banded Cucumber Beetle (*Diabrotica balteata* LeConte)

What are they?

Banded cucumber beetle is a serious agricultural pest. The most frequent damage caused by Banded cucumber beetle is defoliation by adults and larvae feeding on the roots of seedlings (rootworm).

What are the main hosts?

The Banded cucumber beetle is associated with cucurbits (melons, cucumber and pumpkin), beans, brassicas, kumara, tomato, wheat and maize.

What do they look like?

Adults are 5 – 6 mm with a red head. They usually have yellow bands running across the back with a thin green band running lengthwise down the centre (Fig. 1, 2 & 3). Larval colour is variable; initially it is white, but may take on a pale yellow colour depending on the food source. Larvae size varies between 2 – 9 mm.

Why are they an issue?

Banded cucumber beetles are considered a serious pest because they feed on all plant parts, including foliage, blossoms, silk, kernels, plant crown and roots. Adults can be particularly damaging to cucurbit seedlings by consuming the entire cotyledon. Cucurbit fruit can be destroyed either by damage caused directly from adults feeding or through the introduction of secondary rots. Larvae eat roots and tubers exclusively, reducing plant vigour, growth rate and fruit set. Banded cucumber beetle is also known to transmit viruses.

What should I look for?

Larvae will hatch from small groups of eggs which are laid just under the surface of the soil. Once hatched they cause damage to roots and tubers. Plants with damaged roots will lose vigour, have poor growth and may have poor fruit set. Large holes will be left in tubers.

How do they spread?

As the Banded cucumber beetle larvae burrow and feed on roots and tubers the most likely method of spread is larvae remaining with tubers during shipment. Adults can fly short distances so are unlikely to remain with host plant material during processing and transport. Their ability to fly will enable them to disperse into nearby crops. Eggs may be spread through soil movement.

Where are they present?

Banded cucumber beetles are present in North, Central and South America.



Fig 1. Adult Banded cucumber beetle.

Image: Clemson University – USDA Cooperative Extension Slide Series, Bugwood.org

How can I protect my industry?

Check your production sites frequently for the presence of new diseases and unusual symptoms. Make sure you are familiar with common pests and diseases of your industry so you can recognise something different.



Fig 2. Adult Banded cucumber beetle,

Image: Clemson University - USDA Cooperative Extension Slide Series, Bugwood.org



Fig 3. Banded cucumber beetle.

Image: Alton N. Sparks, Jr., University of Georgia, Bugwood.org