

FACT SHEET

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MANAGEMENT OF THE BANANA BORER

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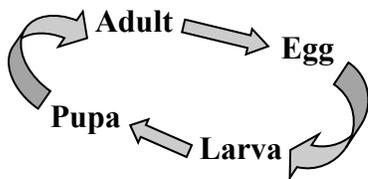
Introduction:

The **banana borer** (*Cosmopolites sordidus*) is an insect, with the **potential to be very destructive to banana and plantain**.



Adult Banana Borer

This black beetle goes through a process called complete metamorphosis; meaning it undergoes four changes in its life cycle.



The adult borer lays eggs in clusters at the base of the corm. When the eggs hatch, the larvae live in and feed on the corm of the banana and plantain plants.

The larval stage is the most destructive.



Larva of the Banana Borer

Symptoms on the affected plants

- **Unhealthy plants:** The leaves of the plants turn yellow, starting from the youngest leaf.
- **Damaged corms:** Tunnels are produced as the larva feeds. This can be observed when the corm is cut in half. The tunnels blacken, because of further attacks by secondary infections e.g. fungi and bacteria.



Damaged Corm

How does the Banana Borer affect production?

When the pest feeds, it damages and destroys the tissues within the affected plant. **Water and nutrient absorption are reduced.** This leads to:

- **Smaller Fruits:** Mature fruits from affected plants are smaller and lighter in weight as compared to fruits from healthy, unaffected plants.
- **Toppling of Plants:** The feeding action of the larva encourages secondary infections which further weaken the base of the plant, causing it to fall (topple).
- **Yield Reduction:** If this pest is not controlled, yields can be reduced by 30 - 60 %. This is because the larva feeds on the food reserves in the corm.

How to Manage the Banana Borer in a New Field

1. Use planting material free from symptoms of borer attack - Ensure there are no rotted areas.

Note: Banana and Plantain can be grown from :

- Corms - base of the plant which give rise to suckers
- Sword or Maiden suckers
- Bull heads (corms from the mother plant)

2. Prepare the corm for planting –

- Pare (trim off the outer layers of the corm).



Pared Corm

- Soak the pared corm in a systemic insecticide solution for 25 minutes.



Prepared planting material

- Drain the soaked

Always use protective gear when handling agro-chemicals

3. Prepare the planting hole and plant.

Note:

It is recommended that the hole be treated before planting. **Drench the planting hole with a soil insecticide/nematicide before planting suckers or corms.**

How to Manage the Banana Borer in an Established Field

1. Carry out Proper Field Sanitation:

- Control weeds in the field especially around the banana plants.
- De-trash (remove dry leaves).
- Remove unwanted plants, suckers and pseudostems (trunks) from the field.
- Remove pest and disease infected plant materials away from the field and burn.

2. Observe fields and plants carefully for symptoms of attack: Eggs can be seen as yellow to yellow-orange clusters at the base of the plant (corm, stool).

3. Conduct a routine spray programme: If eggs are seen, spray the base of the stools with a systemic insecticide.

In fields with high infestations, contact the nearest County Agricultural Office for advice.

4. Use treated planting material to replace plants during the production cycle.

Did you know?

- Adult borers can be caught by setting traps in the field.

How?

- Chop pseudostem (trunk) into pieces and soak in a systemic insecticide solution for one hour.
- Place the soaked pieces randomly in the field. The adult borers will feed on the treated material and die.

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