

MEALYBUGS

Citrus (*Planococcus citri*) and Longtailed (*Pseudococcus longispinus*)

Description

Two common species, citrus, and longtailed, infect a large variety of host plants. They are closely related to scale insects, but have a white waxy covering instead of a hard scale. Adults have irregular filaments of equal length around their bodies, with two longer ones in the back. Both larvae and adults cause damage to the host plant. These sap-sucking insects infest all parts of the plant, secreting honeydew on leaves. The plant suffers from loss of sap, and leaves become discoloured, wilted, and deformed. In addition, a black sooty mould grows on the honeydew that decreases the plant's ability to photosynthesize. Damage results in the eventual death of affected plant parts.

Life Cycle

Mealybugs favour high temperatures and humidity. Females lay eggs in cottony waxy sacs under their bodies after which they die. Eggs hatch in about 10 days; less if temperature is higher. The larvae (crawler) stage moves about the plant to feed. As their life cycle progresses, they develop the waxy covering and move about less. Mature males are winged and do not feed on the plant. With the right conditions, about 30 days are required for one generation. Two to eight overlapping generations are possible in a year, depending on season length, weather conditions, and species. Overwintering may take place in the nymphal or the egg stage, depending on species.



Citrus Mealybug

A.B. Broadbent



Longtailed Mealybug

Alberta Environment Centre

