

Longicorn Borer in Fruit Trees

(Acalolepta mixtus)

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BACKGROUND

The longicorn borer, (*Acalolepta mixtus*) (Family Cerambycidae), attacks a wide range of host plants, such as fruit trees, native trees and ornamental trees. Damaged, recently-pruned or stressed trees are more prone to attack. The borer generally causes damage to the trunk or branches of mango trees and has also been known to attack seedlings that are less than two years old.

APPEARANCE

The longicorn borer is between 20 to 30 mm long, dark grey-brown in colour and has long antennae (at least two thirds as long as the body). Adult borers generally move onto host trees during February to March to lay eggs.

The larvae (grubs) have a white or light cream-coloured body with a brown head and are up to 40 mm long when fully grown. The body is wider at the head and narrower towards the rear end. Constrictions are seen along the body between each segment. When fully grown, the larvae pupate in tunnels of heartwood. The pupal period generally lasts for a few months. To emerge from the wood, adults cut round exit holes (about 7 mm wide) which are seen on the outside of branches and trunks.



Figure 1. An adult longicorn borer



Figure 2. A longicorn borer larva on a damaged mango trunk

LIFE CYCLE

It is thought that the life cycle of this species takes over 12 months, but larval damage is most likely noticed in the late wet to early dry season during March-May.

SYMPTOMS AND DAMAGE

Damaged, stressed or pruned trees, or trees that suffered from water-logging the previous wet season, or were struck by lightning, are all prone to attack. It has also been noticed that if sprinklers are placed too close to the base of the tree trunk, the impact of the water can actually cause the bark to split and allow entry to the borer. Single eggs are inserted into cracks or crevices of bark on trunks and branches. The young larvae tunnel beneath the bark where they feed in the cambial region.

Fruit trees that have been recorded as hosts to the longicorn borer in the Northern Territory include mango, jackfruit, pawpaw, kakadu plum, cashew, citrus and coconut. Many other native and ornamental trees, such as *Ficus virens*, *Moringa oleifera*, *Adansonia digitaria* and *Theobroma cacao* are also affected.

Early symptoms are difficult to detect but sometimes sap exudate can be seen on attacked areas and the bark may appear loose or lifted. In advanced infestations, the bark in the affected areas is often loose and packed with moist chewed fibers and can be peeled off easily revealing circular or irregular feeding channels underneath.



Figure 3. Exit holes and damage to the trunk



Figure 4. Damage to the trunk with the entrance plugged up with frass

For further information on the longicorn borer and its control, contact DPIF Entomology on (08) 8999 2258 or email: insectinfo@nt.gov.au.

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