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Integrated Management of Helopeltis bugs (Mirid bugs or Tea Mosquitoes) in cashew





- Retarded growth of trees and flowering shoots are reduced.
- Elongated angular lesions on young shoots which may exude gummy substance; the lesions may drop off, so that the leaves appear as if attacked by biting insects
- Attacked leaves are deformed and show angular lesions along the veins, which may drop off, so that the leaves appear as if attacked by biting insects.



Feeding on the stalks of the tender shoots causes elongated green lesions

Description of Helopeltis bugs

Helopeltis bugs (*Helopeltis anacardii*), also known as mirid bugs or tea mosquito bugs, are slender, delicate insects, about 7-10mm long with long legs and antennae. Antennae may be twice as long as the body. The females are red and the males are brown to yellowish red. Nymphs (immature bugs) are yellowish in colour. Females lay eggs by inserting into the soft tissue near the tips of flowering or vegetative shoots. The nymphs and the adults of Helopeltis suck sap on the tender leaves, shoots and inflorescence, and even young nuts and apples. Pest population builds up during the beginning of the rainy season when the cashew tree is full of new flush.

Damage caused

- Blistering of plant tissues at the site of infestation due to the insect's toxic saliva.
- Dieback of young shoots.
- Scorched appearance of attacked inflorescence.
- In case of severe infestation, trees may appear as if scorched by fire.
- Bug feeding on developing apples and nuts causes brown sunken spots.

Each insect can damage up to 3-4 shoots or inflorescences during its lifetime leading to heavy loss in nut yield

How to manage Helopeltis bugs

- Conserve natural enemies by avoiding injurious pesticides. Weaver ants build nests on cashew trees providing good protection against this and other bug pests.
- Do not interplant cashew with crops that are host for Helopeltis bugs, such as cotton, tea, sweet potato, guava and mango.
- Monitor the crop regularly in order to implement control measures in a timely manner. Helopeltis attack occurs very suddenly, particularly during the rainy season or when water is available leading to flushing (production of young shoots) when Helopeltis populations normally build up.
- Spray with approved insecticides.