

Agave Weevils

May 2014

Have you seen agaves that turned into a slippery mass of jelly or seem to have wilted overnight? Chances are these plants have been attacked by the agave weevil. It is a significant pest of agave, yucca and various other plants in the families Agavaceae and Dracenaceae.

Agave weevils are a type of beetle; weevils are beetles that have a snout. Adults are small and black. Larvae are small, creamy white and legless (similar to white grubs, but without legs).

Adults tunnel into the stem of the plant and feed on tender tissue. Females then lay eggs inside these feeding tunnels allowing larvae to move to the crown of the plant to feed. Pupae can be found in the root area.

These weevils are associated with microorganisms (bacteria) that can cause plant dieback. Leaves appear to wilt and become wrinkled. The plant will eventually break down into a slippery, mass of tissue and woody fibers.



Photo by Phillip Leveridge.

Conditions that favor infestation are things such as frequent irrigation, plant crowding, poor drainage and using susceptible cultivars (*Agave americana*, *atrovirens*, *attenuata*, *augustifolia*, *cubensis*, *ferdinandisregis*, *fourcroydes*, *lecheguilla*, *salmiana*, *shawii*, *sisalena*, *tequilana*).

Treatment with a systemic insecticide such as imidacloprid can help reduce the levels of infestation. Treatments should be on plants that are not currently infested. Once plants are infested, they should be removed and disposed of. Plants around the area where the infested plant was removed should be treated.

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