

Cup Moths (*Doratifera* spp.)

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Introduction

Cup moth larvae (Family: Limacodidae) are named for their hard spherical “cup-shaped” cocoons. They are found mainly in the tropics. Their larvae are brightly coloured and many are covered in ornate spines.

Appearance

Larvae are slug-like in shape and are quite stout. They are pale to lime green in colour and have paired black and white spots along the length of the back. Larvae are covered in turrets of stinging spines on the thorax which protrude when the larva is disturbed. Green fleshy spikes run along the sides of the body.

Adults have a wingspan of between 20 – 30 mm. They have brown coloured forewings and light tan hindwings. The body of the moth is covered in fine hairs.

Life Cycle

Adult moths are nocturnal and lay their eggs in clusters on host plants such as eucalyptus and acacia. The eggs hatch and the immature larvae feed in a group on the leaf surface, as the larvae mature they disperse over the host to eat whole leaves and in large numbers can completely strip the host tree of leaves. Mature larvae are about 10 -25 mm in length, at this time they spin a hard spherical brown coloured cocoon which is glued to twigs of the host tree from which the adult emerges.



Almost mature larvae



Newly emerged larvae



Cup shaped pupal case

Symptoms and damage

The larvae are present during the wet season and feed on eucalyptus and occasionally melaleucas and acacias. Eucalyptus trees such as river red gums, woolly butts and stringy barks can suffer severe defoliation in most years. Leaves can appear brown and skeletonised or eaten completely. When in high numbers larvae can also be found all over the ground beneath affected trees.

When disturbed the spines on the back of larvae protrude and can cause severe skin reactions, itching and pain may continue for several days.



Skeletonising damage to leaves



Defoliated Eucalyptus tree

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http://www.amonline.net.au/factSheets/cup_moths.htm <http://www-staff.it.uts.edu.au/~don/larvae/lima/quadri.html>

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For further information on this leaflet contact Entomology at insectinfo.drdpifr@nt.gov.au. Agnotes or factsheets on other pests are available from www.dpir.nt.gov.au.

Department of Primary Industry and Resources

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