

Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (*Oryctes rhinoceros*)

Agnes Vargo, Instructor of Entomology, American Samoa Community College

The female coconut rhinoceros beetle (*Oryctes rhinoceros* [L.]) (Coleoptera: Scarabaeidae) burrows into rotting stumps, standing palms and rubbish piles to lay her eggs. The eggs hatch in 8–12 days into whitish grubs, called curl grubs because of their shape. There are four larval stages lasting 12–165 days and a pupal period lasting three to four months.

Adults may live up to six months, during which time a female can lay up to 100 eggs.

The adults are the damaging stage of this insect. They fly at night and feed by tunnelling into the young coconut leaves. This damage causes a typical V-shaped notch. If they reach the growing tip, the palm may be killed or severe loss of leaf tissue may cause decreased nut set.

The beetles attack many species of palms including coconut, betel nut, sago palm and dates. They can also feed on pandanus and other fleshy plants.

This beetle is present in American Samoa and Palau, as well as S.E. Asia and many other islands in the Pacific and Indian Ocean.

Control

Field sanitation is important in controlling the beetle. Standing coconut logs, stumps and rubbish piles should be cleared away. If this is not practical, a ground cover such as *Pueraria phaseoloides* may be used to cover these locations so that the females cannot reach them. Coconut plantations should be replanted when they become too old to maintain an even stand because the beetles prefer isolated trees



Adult rhinoceros beetle



Coconut leaves damaged by rhinoceros beetles

or trees of irregular height. A virus that attacks the larvae and adults has been highly successful in reducing beetle populations in the South Pacific region and is present in American Samoa and in Palau.

For more information about these or other pest control techniques consult an agricultural extension agent at your local land grant institution.

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For Further Information:

American Samoa Community College (684) 699-1575 - fax (684) 699-5011
College of Micronesia (691) 320-2462 - fax (691) 320-2726
College of Micronesia (FSM) (691) 320-2480 - fax (691) 320-2479
College of the Marshall Islands (692) 625-3236 - fax (692) 625-4699
Palau Community College (680) 488-2746 - fax (680) 488-3307
Northern Marianas College (670) 234-9023 - fax (670) 234-0054
University of Guam (671) 735-2002 - fax (671) 734-5600
University of Hawaii (808) 956-8140 - fax (808) 956-6967

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ADAP Home Office - College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources
3050 Maile Way, Gilmore Hall 213, University of Hawaii at Manoa
Honolulu, HI 96822 USA www.adap.hawaii.edu/adap - adap@hawaii.edu
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