

Lantana biocontrol

Phenacoccus parvus



PHENACOCCLUS PARVUS

Phenacoccus parvus, a mealy bug, was introduced accidentally as a contaminant on imported plants. As it feeds on many different plants, it is not recommended as a biocontrol agent.

ORIGIN

- *P. parvus* occurs naturally in Mexico and Central America.
- The insect was introduced into Australia accidentally in 1988.

BIOLOGY

- Adults feed on the undersides of leaves and on green stems.
- Eggs are laid on the undersides of fully expanded, mature leaves.
- Crawlers prefer the undersides of mature leaves, and cluster along leaf veins.
- Development from egg to adult takes about 26 days.
- Adults live for about three months.

AUSTRALIAN DISTRIBUTION AND IMPACT ON LANTANA

- *P. parvus* is found in isolated populations from far north Queensland to central New South Wales, and around Perth.
- The bug is common in the drier regions of northern New South Wales and southern Queensland.
- Population numbers of *P. parvus* increase during dry periods.
- The bug can cause immense damage to lantana, which become leafless and devoid of flowers and fruits.
- As economically important plants, such as tomato and eggplant, have been attacked, redistribution of the insect is not recommended.

