

Vine Mealybug (VMB)

Planococcus ficus
(Signoret)



Origin

The Vine Mealybug (VMB) is native to Africa, South America, the Middle East and the Mediterranean regions of Europe. Studies indicate that the California strain of the species originally came from Israel.

Current Distribution

VMB has been found in Alameda, Amador, Fresno, Kern, Madera, Merced, Monterey, Napa, Riverside, Sacramento, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Solano, Tulare and Yolo counties.

Biology

VMB has four to seven generations per year, depending on temperature and location. All life stages might be present year-round on grapevines.

Host Range

VMB is a pest of grapes in California. It has also been reported to attack figs, mangoes, and pomegranates.

How It Spreads

Evidence suggests that this pest was spread by the movement of infested vineyard equipment (mechanical harvesters, bins, tractors, etc.) and nursery stock. Other possible modes include field crews and natural dispersion such as birds, wind-blown infested leaves, and crawling.



Potential Damage

Grape clusters infested with VMB become contaminated with honeydew, sooty mold, egg sacs, and mealybugs. In Southern California, severe VMB infestations have reduced vine growth and resulted in defoliation, bunch rots, and even spur and cane death. In addition, VMB can spread grapevine viral diseases such as leafroll and corky bark.

Current Control Measures

A number of insecticides can be used to control VMB. Mating disruption and biocontrol measures have also been used. However, VMB control can be costly and challenging.