

Pest Alert

Invasion and Establishment of Woolly Whitefly *Aleurothrixus floccosus* (Maskell) in India

Invasion of the highly polyphagous woolly whitefly, *Aleurothrixus floccosus* (Maskell) (Hemiptera: Aleyrodidae) on guava (*Psidium guajava* L.) was recorded in Kozhikode district in Kerala, India during November 2019 (Sundararaj *et al.*, 2020). In recent surveys revealed the further expansion of its geographical distribution range in India. It was found in Ramanagara, Mandya and Bangalore districts in Karnataka and Coimbatore district in Tamil Nadu on guava. Beside mainland distribution, it was also noticed in three islands viz., Kavaratti, Keltan and Amini in Lakshadweep on guava. It is believed that woolly whitefly might be moved to Lakshadweep from mainland through transportation of infested seedlings. The pest spread rapidly in India mainly through transportation of infested seedlings.

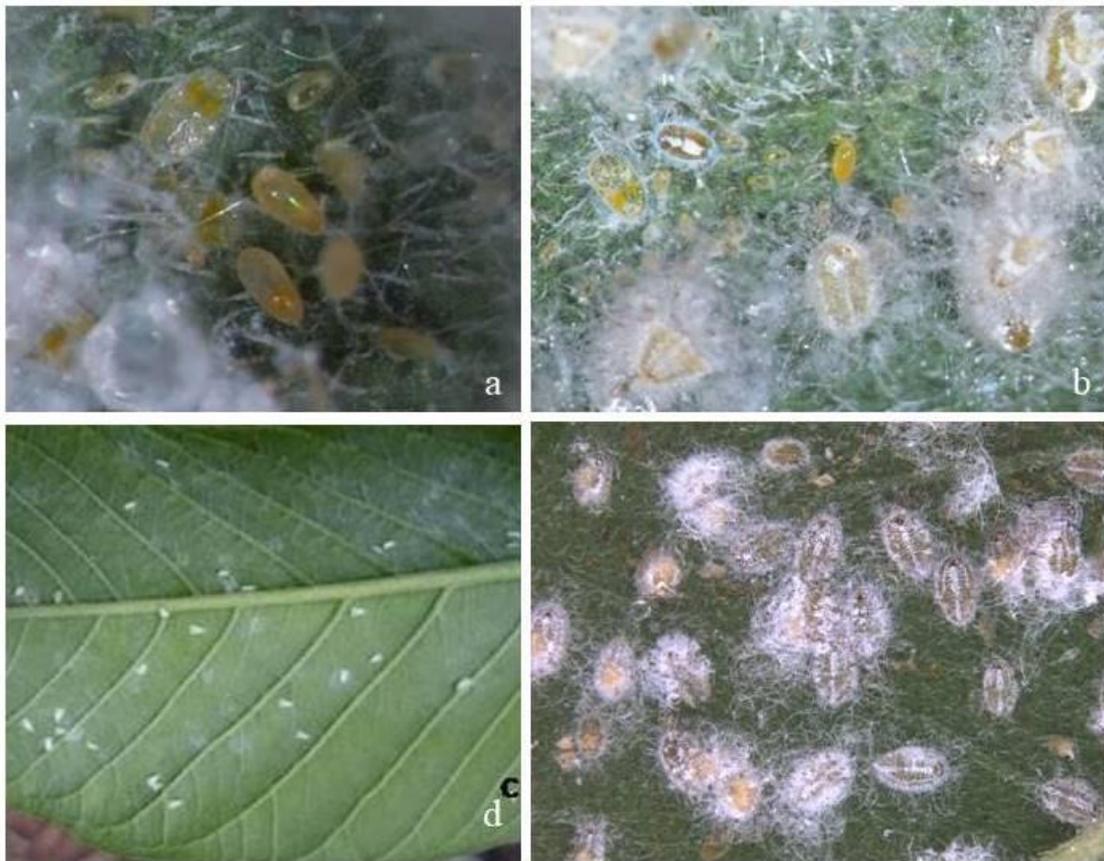


This is also called as citrus whitefly and believed to be of Neotropical origin but is now found throughout the warmer parts of the world, wherever citrus is grown. It is reported to be feeding on more than 20 plant families and exhibits a strong preference for citrus species.

Within a span of four years, four exotic whiteflies invaded in guava ecosystem. *A. floccosus* is co-existence with *P. bondari*, *P. minei*, *A. dispersus* and *A. rugioferculatus*. *A. floccosus* is found to be dominant species which may replace the existing invasives and native species in the guava ecosystem by inter-specific competition.

Adults lays pale white stalked eggs in a circular pattern on newly emerged leaves and turn to brown before hatching. The first nymphal instar is light green with functional legs and

subsequent stages turn brown in with slight to heavy wool like wax filaments cover. The adult is approximately 1.5 mm in length, with a yellow-white body and wings that are covered with a white waxy powder and they prefer to feed on the undersides of young leaves that sprout when the host trees are actively growing.



No natural parasitism either by any indigenous parasitoid or its known potential parasitoid, *Cales noacki* (Hymenoptera: Aphelinidae) is observed so far in India. The polyphagous nature of the non-native *A. floccosus* warrants immediate stringent quarantine protocols to prevent its further spread to other guava and citrus growing areas in India.

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