

NOTE

Presence in Portugal of *Epitrix similaris* Gentner (Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae: Alticinae), an exotic pest of potato tubers

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The occurrence in Portugal and Palaeartic Region of the nearctic species *Epitrix similaris* Gentner, a potato tuber pest, is reported for the first time.

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Figure 1. Leaf and tuber damage by *Epitrix similaris* on potato, adult habitus, *spermatheca*, and *aedeagus* (see text).

The genus *Epitrix* Foudras (Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae: Alticinae) has nearly 180 known species worldwide with 17 species known in the Palaearctic Region (DOEBERL, 2000).

It is oligophagous, adapted to plants of the family Solanaceae. A few american species of *Epitrix*, with remarkable similar external appearance are pests of potato. Adults are very tiny, dark, pubescent, oval and convex, feed on leaves, causing a typical "shot-hole" aspect of leaves (Fig 1A). Damage by adults is rarely economically important. Larvae mine the tubers superficially under the epidermis (Fig 1B). Although this damage is often removable by peeling, it may lead to market rejection. Wounds caused by larval feeding may favour pathogen entry and reduce tuber storage capability.

In Portugal, *Epitrix*-like damage in potato tubers was first noticed in 2004 in the North (Oporto) and since then has spread Northward (Galicia border) and Southward (Mondego and Tagus valleys), alarming Portuguese producers (OLIVEIRA *et al.*, 2008).

Between July 2007 and October 2008, adults collected from potato (*Solanum tuberosum* L.), egg-plant (*Solanum melongena* L.) and jimsonweed (*Datura stramonium* L.) were received at INRB: 72 specimens were observed, out of which 55 were dissected (30 males and 25 females).

Based on adult *habitus* (Fig. 1C) all insects belonged to the genus *Epitrix* Foudras. Based on female *spermatheca* (Fig. 1D) and male *aedeagus* (Fig. 1E) all dissected specimens belonged to the species *Epitrix similaris* (SEENO & ANDREWS, 1972). No specimens of *Epitrix tuberis* Gentner (SEENO & ANDREWS, 1972), or *Epitrix cucumeris* (Harris) (DOEBERL, 2000), were found in the samples. The identification of *E. similaris* was kindly confirmed by Dr Manfred Doeberl (Germany), specialist in the genus *Epitrix*.

Given the relevance of this issue to potato producers, the national phytosanitary authorities were informed. Although none of the quarantine species *E. tuberis* and *E. cucumeris* (EPPO A1 List) appeared in the samples received so far, it is not impossible that they could also have been introduced into Portugal but not yet detected.

RESUMEN

BOAVIDA, C. 2009. Presencia en Portugal de *Epitrix similaris* Gentner (Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae: Alticinae), plaga exótica de los tubérculos de batata. *Bol. San. Veg. Plagas*, **35**: 73-74.

La presencia en Portugal y zona palaeartica de la especie nearctica *Epitrix similaris* Gentner (Chrysomelidae: Alticinae), plaga de los tubérculos de batata, se cita por primera vez.

Palabras Clave: Palaearctico, *Epitrix tuberis*, *Epitrix cucumeris*.

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