Technical Bulletin #43:

Rice Bug: Leptocorisa oratorius

Rice bug

Description

There are several species of rice bugs, or rice seed bugs. Adults are about 15 mm long and 3 mm wide, have long legs, and a brownish-green body. An infested field can be recognized by the rice bugs' offensive odor. Adults are active in the late afternoon and early morning, and rest in shaded areas. Each female lays hundreds of eggs during a lifetime of two to five months. Younger nymphs are pale in color with long antennae, and they become yellowish-green later. Adults have long legs with a slender body, and are active during the early morning and late afternoon.

Damage

Rice bugs damage rice by sucking out the contents of developing grains, from pre-flowering spikelets to soft dough stage, causing grain discoloration. Immature and adult rice bugs both feed on rice grains, which results in small, shriveled, spotty, or deformed grains.

Rice bug

Factors favoring insect development:

- Staggered rice planting.
- Warm weather, overcast skies, and frequent drizzles.
- Flowering to milky stages of the rice plant.

Controlling rice bugs:

- **Field sanitation:** Remove weeds from fields and surrounding areas to prevent the multiplication of rice bugs during fallow periods.

- **Planting at the same time:** Level fields with even applications of fertilizer and water, which encourages rice to grow and develop at the same rate. Planting fields within a village at the same time also helps reduce rice bug problems. Many traditional photoperiod-sensitive rice varieties tend to flower at the same stage, even when planted a week or more apart. Many "modern" varieties are photoperiod insensitive and should therefore be planted – to the extent possible – at the same time.

Green rice bug

- **Mechanical measures:** Some farmers set fires downwind of fields, so that the smoke blows over the field. However, even if the smoke disturbs rice bugs, they will return later. Capturing rice bugs, in the early morning or late afternoon,

by net can be effective at low rice bug densities, although this method is labor intensive.

- **Chemical control:** Begin scouting the field at pre-flowering and continue daily until the hard dough stage. Count rice bugs in the early morning or late afternoon from 20 hills while walking diagonally across a transplanted field. Adults often fly out of the way before you reach the rice plant, so counts may only reveal immature forms. Direct control may be required if there are more than 10 rice bugs for every 20 hills. The choice of insecticide depends on many factors, such as the application equipment available, cost of the insecticide, experience of the applicator, and presence of fish. The benefits of using an insecticide must be weighed against the risks to health and the environment. Before using a pesticide contact your Cambodia HARVEST technician for suggestions, guidance, and warnings specific to your situation.

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