Fact sheet

Tomato potato psyllid (TPP)
*Bactericera cockerelli*

What is it?
The Tomato potato psyllid (TPP) is a tiny insect pest that attacks the Solanaceae family of plants including potato, tomato, eggplant, capsicum, chilli and tamarillo. It can also be found on other plants and has been recorded attacking sweet potato and other plants in the Convolvulaceae family.

What does it looks like?
TPP is a tiny sap-sucking insect with three stages of development – egg, nymph and adult. All stages are very small (less than 3mm) but can be seen with the naked eye. Adults and nymphs cause injury to plants when feeding.

Adult TPP (3mm long) resemble small winged cicadas in appearance, but are the size of an aphid. The body is brownish and has white or yellowish markings on the thorax and a broad white band on the abdomen. Wings are transparent and held vertically over the body.

How is it spread?
TPP was detected in commercial crops and backyard gardens in Perth, Western Australia in February 2017. The psyllid can spread through the movement of plant produce. It can also disperse through natural pathways such as flight and wind.

TPP has not been detected in South Australia or any other states.
It has been determined nationally that TPP cannot be eradicated in Australia. Interstate movement controls have been implemented for risk material to reduce the risk of further spread. TPP is also capable of transmitting zebra chip disease, which poses a threat to important horticultural crops. The zebra chip bacterium (*Candidatus Liberibacter solanacearum*) has not been found in Western Australia.

**What to look out for – Signs of psyllid**

When present in a crop, noticeable signs of TPP include:

- Insects jumping from the foliage when disturbed. Adult psyllids are sometimes called jumping plant lice as they readily jump and fly when disturbed.
- Severe wilting of plants occurs when there are large numbers of psyllids feeding.
- Yellowing of leaf margins and upward curling of the leaves may occur which is caused by the injection of salivary toxins.
- A sugar-rich sticky liquid called honeydew, which coats plant leaves and stems, and can lead to the development of sooty mould.
- Ants on plants may be symptomatic of the presence of sucking insects.
- Stem death symptoms similar to other potato and tomato disorders.

**What to do**

Growers can put on-farm biosecurity measures in place to reduce the chance of pests and disease getting onto their properties.

These include:

- using pest-free propagation material and seedlings, sourced from a reputable supplier
- putting up farm biosecurity signs on gates and fences to manage visitors coming onto your property
- avoiding sharing equipment
- keeping equipment and vehicles clean and free of plant matter
- wearing clean clothing before visiting other growers’ properties
- teaching farm workers on-farm hygiene practices, what to look for and how to report unusual pests and diseases.
- If you think TPP or the bacterium that causes Zebra chip disease may be present in your plants, you must report this to the **Exotic Plant Pest Hotline** on **1800 084 881**