

THE CATS CLAW CREEPER GOLDEN SPOTTED TORTOISE BEETLE

(*Charidotis auroguttata*)

A natural enemy of CATS CLAW
CREEPER (*Macfadyena unguis-cati*)
in South Africa

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DOSSIERS ON BIOLOGICAL CONTROL AGENTS AVAILABLE TO AID ALIEN PLANT CONTROL

DESCRIPTION

Mature adult beetles are dark-red with bright golden spots, while newly-emerged adults are a paler red with duller spots.

LIFE CYCLE

The eggs are laid singly on the upper and lower leaf surfaces and also on the stems of the plant. Each egg is enveloped by a cover, which is held umbrella-like over the egg. The eggs hatch after 9-11 days. The larvae (young) feed on both young and old leaves and have a fork-like structure at the back on which all the old moulted skins and faeces are stored to form a protective covering.

The larvae undergo five instars (growth stages) during their development which lasts about 23 days. The 1st to 4th instar larvae are yellow and the 5th instars are dark grey. The late 5th instars do not feed for 1-3 days before pupating. Larvae pupate on the lower leaves or on the leaf litter around the stem. This stage lasts 8-10 days. Upon emergence adults are pale red, but after 5-7 days they develop a dark, brownish-red colour with golden speckles. The beetles usually occur singly on the undersides of the leaves feeding on both young and old leaves. Adult females begin to lay eggs when they are about 16 days old, laying 1-3 eggs per day. Adults can live up to 6 months.

FEEDING DAMAGE

Adult and larval feeding is indicated by linear feeding scars and causes the leaves to become skeletonized. When the beetles are present in high numbers, the feeding damage causes the leaves to drop off the plant and the shoot tips to die back.

IMPACT ON THE WEED

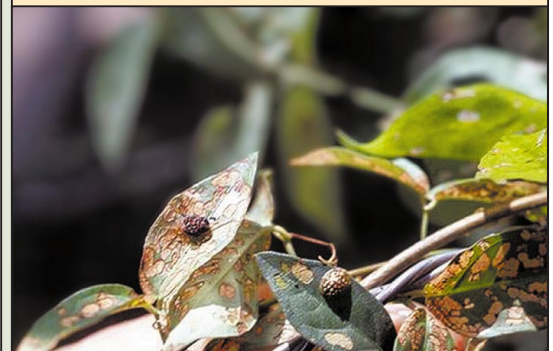
By causing leaf drop and die back of new shoots, high beetle populations can reduce the density of the weed and its mats, allowing other desirable plants to outcompete and displace the weed.



Adult tortoise beetle



Tortoise beetle larva



Adult and larval damage on leaves



Adult and larval damage on leaves



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE. PHONE: Weedbuster Toll-free Helpline: 0800 005 376
WEBSITE: PPRI website is located via links from the Agricultural Research Council website: www.arc.agric.za

