

# Tomato/Potato Psyllid

## Organic farmer questionnaire, April 2011



The potato/tomato psyllid is one of the most unwelcome new migrants to New Zealand, being identified here first in 2006. It poses a serious threat to both commercial production of important vegetable crops, and also to home gardeners and their ability to produce the traditional staple home-grown foods, potatoes and tomatoes.

There are several varieties of psyllid, but they are very plant specific. This one feeds just on plants belonging to the *solanaceae spp*, but may spread to some members of the *convolvulaceae spp*.

Members of Organic Farm NZ are asked if they could contribute to a pilot study being initiated by the OFNZ National Coordinating Committee (NCC). We believe it is possible that organic growers are encountering less of a problem with this insect than chemical growers, but it is necessary to gather data to confirm this.

The impact of the insect may vary according to region and climatic type, but useful information is available from Colorado State University, indicating that cold winters are not a total defence!

**The hypothesis is that healthy plants grown in healthy soils under organic management, experience less damage from psyllid attack than plants grown under chemical management.**

Your response to these questions would be appreciated:

1. Have you noticed any occurrence of the potato/tomato psyllid on crops you have grown? If "yes", how serious was the damage?
2. Have you heard of the psyllid being a problem for chemical growers in your district?
3. What types of crops do you grow that belong to the *solanaceae* family?
4. What defence methods have you established against psyllid attack? (eg. predators, herbs, weed control.)
5. Have you a spray programme to control the psyllid? If "yes", please indicate what sprays you use and how successful they have been.
6. What is the name of your nearest town?

A number of websites provide useful information about the psyllid. A google search will produce an extensive list. Particularly recommended is the fact sheet from Plant and Food Research - [http://www.organicfarm.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/Tomato-Potato-Psyllid\\_control-home-garden.pdf](http://www.organicfarm.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/Tomato-Potato-Psyllid_control-home-garden.pdf)

Thanks for your time,

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