

Cotton Seed Bug (*Oxycarenus hyalinipennis*)

Quick Reference for Growers

The cotton seed bug is an invasive pest that feeds on cotton and other plants in the Malvaceae family, including hibiscus, kenaf, okra, and roselle. It reduces seed quality and can stain lint during ginning.

What the Cotton Seed Bug Looks Like



Adults

- Brown to black
- Translucent white wings
- About 3.5–5 mm long



Nymphs

- Wingless
- Red abdomens
- Grow from about 1.2–3.7 mm



Eggs

- Oval, less than 1 mm
- Yellow, orange, or pink

Where and When to Look



Cotton seed bugs are most visible when host plants are producing seed, especially on open cotton bolls. Infested bolls may appear to be “covered with fleas.”

Look for adults or nymphs:

- On open bolls or mature seed pods of cotton
- On other Malvaceae hosts
- In plant litter
- Under live or dead leaves
- In tree bark crevices
- In used sacks, crates, or other stored materials
- On manmade structures (cracks in posts or walls)

How to Detect the Cotton Seed Bug

Visual Inspection	Check host plants routinely when seed is present. Prioritize edges and corners of cotton and okra fields. Look for clusters of small dark insects on open bolls.
Sentinel Sites	Consider establishing fixed inspection sites with known host plants.
Leaf Litter Checks	Sift through leaf litter under host plants during non-seed periods (less efficient but useful).
Facilities Monitoring	Seed companies, processors, and anyone handling un-ginned cotton should remain alert.

Potential Damage

- Reduced seed weight, germination, and oil content
- Lint staining, if insects are crushed during ginning

Mitigation (What We Know So Far)

Research is ongoing with USDA’s Agricultural Research Service and other partners.

Current recommendations:

- Early detection is the most effective tool.
- Reduce host weeds in and around fields to limit feeding and breeding sites.
- Avoid movement of infested materials, including used sacks, plant litter, and un-ginned cotton.
- Report immediately to ensure rapid identification and response.

If You Suspect Cotton Seed Bug

- Do not transport the material.
- Collect a sample or take clear photos, if safe to do so.
- Contact one of the following for confirmation:
 - Your State Plant Regulatory Official
 - Your local extension office
 - Your local USDA office

Register for [PestLens](#) to view the New Pest Response Guidelines.