



## Colorado Beetle

*Leptinotarsa decemlineata*

### Plant Pest Information Note

#### What is it?

*Leptinotarsa decemlineata* commonly known as Colorado Beetle is a beetle which feeds on members of the *Solanaceae* family, especially the *Solanum tuberosum*, potato. The beetle originated in the USA and was introduced into Europe in the early 1920's. It has become fairly widespread since then moving into numerous EPPO (European &



Mediterranean Plant Protection organisation) countries including Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and the UK.

It has yet to be discovered in Ireland but scientists believe that because of its vast spread since introduction it could be capable of surviving in most climates within the EPPO region. The adults are

approximately 10mm long, with brown heads and characteristic black dots (shown above). Their backs/wing covers are striped yellow and black. Their larvae are also very distinctive. They have orange/red bodies and also have distinctive black spots/scales along their sides (shown below right).

#### Why should we be worried about it?

*Leptinotarsa decemlineata* is considered to be one of the most destructive pests of potatoes where it is found. Some growers have been hit with up to 50% losses in their potato crop. This is owing to the fact that all stages of growth feed on the potato plant and also owes to the fact females can produce up to 2000 eggs over several weeks. This means a relatively small infestation can quickly get out of control in a matter of days. While it may not be able to breed in the same way here as it



has done in mainland Europe, the beetle is still renowned for its ability to adapt to difficult climatic conditions and could possibly survive and mate here. It is imperative that this beetle does get the chance to establish here and affect our important potato industry. The picture on the right shows the larvae of the Colorado beetle.

### What are its hosts?

The host range of this organism is very small and only infects potatoes.

<u>Botanical Name</u>	<u>Common Name</u>
<i>Solanum tuberosum</i>	Potato

### What are its symptoms?

The main symptoms of this pest are a result of feeding on the potato plant. Both adults and larvae feed on the leaves of the plant and will strip the leaf right back to the stem. They also secrete black ooze when feeding which can be visible on the leaves. Both the adults and larvae are fairly large and distinctive looking so they can be easily



identified. Normally when a plant is shaken the adults and larvae will release their grip and fall to the ground. The picture on the left shows a female laying eggs on the leaves of a potato plant.

### How does it spread?

One method of dispersal for the Colorado Beetle is by wind. The can also travel over large distances through water. The main method of

spread is in international trade where it can be present in plants, tubers and packaging.

### Action in the event of suspect cases

This pest is regulated by European legislation and staff of the Horticulture and Plant Health Division are regularly inspecting plants on farms, glasshouses/protected structures and growing facilities around the country. If you see suspicious symptoms please contact your local plant health inspector or either of these Division Headquarters at the numbers below.

Horticulture and Plant Health Division,  
Ground Floor, Block 1,  
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food,

Backweston Campus, Young's Cross,  
Celbridge, Co. Kildare  
Phone: 01-5058885  
Fax: 01-6275994  
[plantandpests@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:plantandpests@agriculture.gov.ie)

Further information and symptoms on this pest can be viewed on the website of the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) by clicking on the links below.

All Photographs are courtesy of EPPO.

[Leptinotarsa decemlineata - EPPO - Data Sheet](#)