

Farmer Fact Sheet 22: Sliperi Kabis Flea Beetle



What is it?

It is an insect that feeds on the leaves of *sliperi kabis*. It also feeds on okra, but not on the garden hibiscus. The beetle came from Papua New Guinea in about 1980.

What damage does it do?

Adult beetles feed on the leaves making many small holes. The damage is so severe that throughout Solomon Islands people have stopped growing *sliperi kabis*. Eggs are laid close to the base of the plant; the grubs or larvae feed on the root tips.

How do I identify it?

Look for small holes in the leaves (photo, right), and the black and orange-brown beetles (4 mm long) (photo, left). The beetles hide during the hotter times of the day.

How do I manage the beetles?

DO NOT take *sliperi kabis* leaves or plants to Temotu, and Rennell and Bellona Provinces: they are still free from the beetle.

Cultural practices:

- Some growers have found less damage if they grow *sliperi kabis*: a) in the shade; b) among clover; or c) if they put a thick mulch around the plants;
- DO NOT plant a garden of *sliperi kabis* near an older one where the beetle is present. Plant the new garden as far away as possible;
- Grow more *sliperi kabis* in the wet season. There are fewer beetles at that time.

Chemical control:

- Use synthetic pyrethroids, such as lambda cyhalothrin or permethrin. Read the instructions BEFORE you spray;
- A variety of Derris, brought from Papua New Guinea many years ago, is effective as a spray. Contact MAL or Kastom Gaden Association for plants and methods of preparation.