

New pest field guide for plantation industry

January 24 2013



Murdoch University researchers have compiled a new field guide for the hardwood plantation industry which features more than 400 photographs of pests, diseases and nutrient deficiencies.

Mamoru Matsuki and Francisco Tovar from the School of Veterinary and Life Sciences have summarised ecological information gathered over more than a decade for the guide.

The book, which is entitled *Field Guide for Eucalyptus globulus Plantations in [Western Australia](#) and the Green Triangle*, was produced in conjunction with industry workers who identified the need for a guide to aid them while they are in the field.

Designed to be practical, the book has been printed on waterproof paper, features colour coded sections for rapid navigation and uses double page spreads to illustrate similar or related pests or diseases.

"While the guide is primarily aimed at foresters working in the bluegum industry in mainland Australia, we hope it will also prove useful to farmers, land owners and environmental groups in other regions," said Mr Tovar.

"While working with the Industry [Pest Management](#) Group to put the guide together, we had non experts in mind and as such the publication is very picture based.

"Many of the species we highlight are new or previously undescribed such as *Heteronyx* sp. Nov 8, a beetle which feeds on the leaves of [seedlings](#) and older trees. *Heteronyx* [beetles](#) are a diverse group of insects, usually locally endemic, that under the right conditions such as after summer rains and during warm nights, can form large swarms with hundreds of individuals able to completely defoliate seedlings."

Mr Tovar added that more common [pest species](#) like *Gonipterus platensis* are also described in the guide.

"This is the most important pest species currently affecting plantations in WA. In large numbers it can defoliate the top third of tree crowns leading to reduced height growth and loss of leading stems."

The guide is the latest tool Murdoch researchers have provided to the industry to better record tree health in [plantations](#).

"Previously we released a smartphone 'app' that allows foresters to record pest and diseases they observe in the field," said Mr Tovar.

"We hope the guide will further help the industry to correctly identify and take action against such pest outbreaks before the insects can do too much damage."

Provided by Murdoch University

Citation: New pest field guide for plantation industry (2013, January 24) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-01-pest-field-plantation-industry.html>

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