A Rough Sweetpotato Weevil

*Blosyrus asellus* (Olivier)

(Coleoptera: Curculionidae)

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**Introduction.** Immature specimens of a rough sweetpotato weevil, *Blosyrus asellus* (Olivier) were first collected in Hawaii at a commercial Okinawan sweet potato farm in Waipio, Oahu, on November 14, 2008. Identification was made by A. Samuelson of the Bishop Museum on January 23, 2009. This species occurs in Southeast and Eastern Asia, Philippines, Japan, Taiwan and China. It is not known to occur on the mainland U.S.

**Description.** Adult *Blosyrus* (Fig. 1) are ¼” (6 mm) long, brown, with their forewings (elytra) ridged and rough. There are several color forms of the adult weevil – brown and dark brown. Adults are foliage-feeding and create notches along the edges of the sweet potato leaves (Fig. 3). However, like other *Blosyrus*, the white C-shaped grubs (Fig. 2) are more damaging as they live beneath the soil surface and gouge grooves or channels along the surface of the storage root as they feed (Smit, year unknown). Damage by the grubs reduces marketability.

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**Figure 1.** Enlarged photo of an adult *Blosyrus asellus* (Olivier). Length of the weevil is ¼” (6 mm).

**Figure 2.** Grooves cut into the exterior of Okinawan sweet potato (upper photo) by *B. asellus* grubs (lower photo).
found at a commercial farm at Waiahole in Windward Oahu, Poamoho, and Pearl City in central Oahu. In March of 2011, this weevil pest was detected on Kauai. Surveys to locate the beetle elsewhere in the State are in progress.

Detection. Adult weevils are nocturnal and are difficult to detect in the field during the day. They hide among the foliage. When disturbed, they drop to the ground and remain motionless. With their brown color, they blend in well with the soil. Weevil grubs are in the soil associated with the storage root. Grooves created by the grubs are not apparent until the root is extracted. Feeding notches created by the adult (Fig. 3) are indications that Blosyris is in the area.

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Reference

http://www.lucidcentral.org/keys/sweetpotato