

Cactus Moth

How to spot this invasive pest?

1. Check for larvae.

The larval stage is the most distinctive life stage of the cactus moth. Mature larvae are reddish-orange with black spots forming transverse bands.



Figure 1. Cactus moth larvae.

2. Check for damage to cactus pads.

Cactus moth larvae internally feed on the pads of prickly pear cacti. Damaged pads will show characteristic oozing of plant juices and insect excrement.



Figure 2. Prickly-pear cactus pad with early evidence of a cactus moth infestation. A coin-sized tan patch with 5-9 exit holes surround the original entry. These small holes are used by larvae to expel droppings.

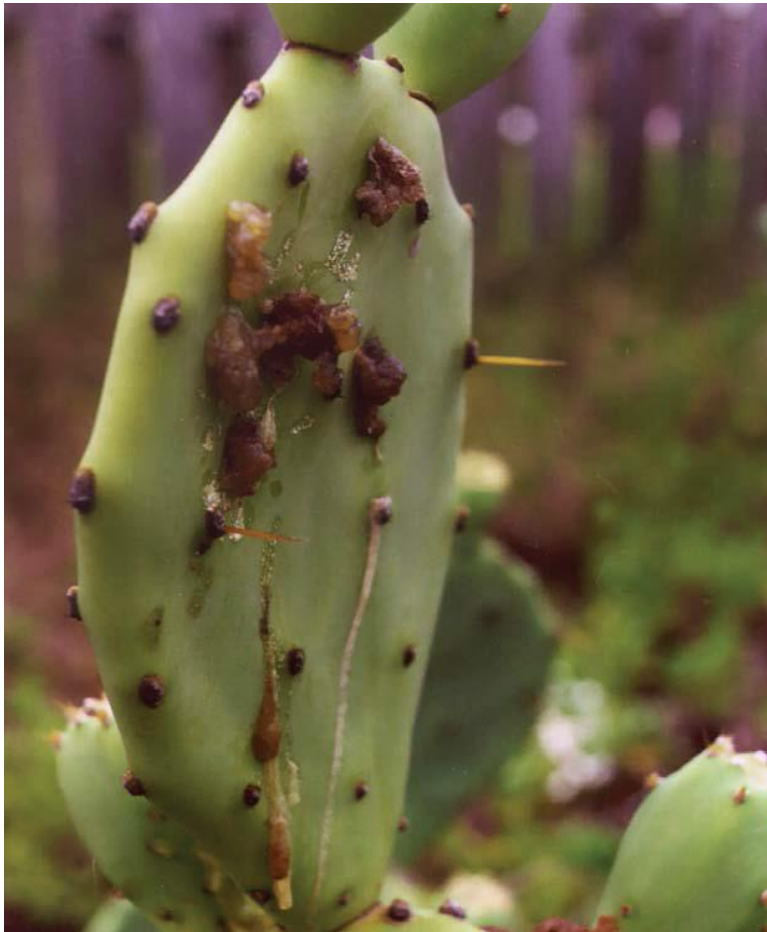


Figure 3. Damaged prickly-pear cactus pad caused by internal feeding of cactus moth larvae.

3. Check for egg sticks.

Adult cactus moths lay chains of eggs called egg sticks that resemble the naturally occurring spines on prickly pear pads. The egg sticks are distinguished from spines by their curved appearance.



Figure 4. Cactus moth egg stick.