NOTE

First Report of the Pink Hibiscus Mealybug, *Maconellicoccus hirsutus* (Green)
(Hemiptera: Pseudococcidae), in South Carolina¹

Juang-Horng Chong²


**KEY WORDS** PHM, hibiscus, biology, biological control, distribution, invasive species, management

This paper reports the first detection of pink hibiscus mealybug (PHM), *Maconellicoccus hirsutus* (Green) (Hemiptera: Pseudococcidae), in South Carolina. The first observation of *M. hirsutus* was a small isolated infestation of three potted hibiscus plants, *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* L. (Malvaceae), about 60 cm in height. The infestation was detected by the author in September 2009 at a residential property in Little River, Horry County, SC. The author was alerted by the homeowner’s inquiries about mealybug control on tropical hibiscus. The infested terminals and leaves were distorted and showed the characteristic ‘bunchy-top’ deformation as described by Kairo et al. (2000). Numerous second- and third-instar nymphs and young adult females were harbored within the deformed terminals. No ovipositing female mealybugs were observed, suggesting that the infestation was in its initial stage of establishment. No sign of parasitism or predation was observed.

Samples were collected from the infested plants and specimens were identified as *M. hirsutus* by the author based on morphological characteristics (Miller 1999, 2005). The identification was subsequently confirmed by Glenn D. Landau (USDA-APHIS, Columbia, SC) and Gregory A. Evans (USDA-APHIS, Beltsville, MD). Voucher specimens are deposited at the Clemson University Arthropod Collection and with USDA-APHIS (Beltsville, MD).

The infested plants were destroyed by a plant health inspector from Clemson University Department of Plant Industry (DPI) the day after the initial detection. The infested plants were purchased by the homeowner at a local home improvement store about one month before the detection. Trace-back conducted by DPI determined that the infested plants originated from a nursery in Homestead, FL. The infestation at Little River is being eradicated (NAPIS 2010). The detection of *M. hirsutus* in SC may have significant economic implications for the agriculture in the state. To date, no quarantine or other regulatory activities against *M. hirsutus* have been imposed by DPI and USDA-APHIS in SC.

¹Accepted for publication 30 September 2010.
²Department of Entomology, Soils, and Plant Sciences, Clemson University, Pee Dee Research and Education Center, 2200 Pocket Road, Florence, SC 29506. E-mail: juanghc@clemson.edu