AU PEST ALERT: Sugarcane beetle activity in Alabama
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This is an alert about a sporadic insect pest of sweet corn and sugarcane that has been reported twice in May of 2009 from two northern counties of Alabama (map on left) as a sporadic pest of sweet corn. This insect is called the sugarcane beetle, *Eueetheola rugiceps*, belonging to the family Scarabaeeidae (i.e., scarab beetles). Adult beetle is uniformly black insect with spiny legs and few longitudinal lines on the hardened forewing as seen from the top (see below). Sugarcane beetle is generally considered a sporadic pest (irregular occurrence) in many southern states; however, local crop damage could be severe in some cases due to late diagnosis of the problem. Larvae feed on corn roots similar to the feeding habit of corn rootworms but larval feeding is nonthreatening in case of the sugarcane beetle. Main problem are the adult beetles that feed just below the soil surface at the base of sweet corn plants creating holes and stalk rot. In Alabama, seedling corn was attacked in straight rows (see below); typically, beetles will feed at the base of plants at soil line and then follow cracks in soil to the next plant. Corn close to sod fields is most vulnerable and there is little producers can do to alleviate the situation in the current year. At present, there are no insecticides registered in sweet corn in Alabama to control this pest. Some registered products, like synthetic pyrethroids, require thorough coverage at high application rate with no guarantees on treatment success. At-planting insecticidal treatments (chlorpyrifos, terbufos, and bifenthrin) may provide some suppression in following years as these are broad-spectrum insecticides, but more research is needed to confirm success. Cultural practices like not growing sweet corn near sod fields and early planting of vigorous corn hybrids may provide some relief. It is wise to consult an Extension Agent or a crop advisor before you apply any of the restricted use insecticides because timing and rates you apply without proper assessment could be expensive. For benefiting farmers, a sugarcane beetle tracker has been added to the Alabama IPM Insect Monitoring Program ([https://sites.aces.edu/group/commhort/vegetable/Vegetable/alabama_IPM_trap_network.aspx](https://sites.aces.edu/group/commhort/vegetable/Vegetable/alabama_IPM_trap_network.aspx)).


Please provide us feedback as to how you use AU Pest Alert information and impact of this program on your farm by filling out the on-line survey on the [https://sites.aces.edu/group/commhort/vegetable/Vegetable/alabama_IPM_trap_network.aspx](https://sites.aces.edu/group/commhort/vegetable/Vegetable/alabama_IPM_trap_network.aspx) or emailing azm0024@auburn.edu. Thank you for your feedback.