

# STRAWBERRY GUAVA SCALE

## *Tectococcus ovatus*

July 2019



### The introduction of strawberry guava scale.

A Brazilian scale insect has been released in Rarotonga to control strawberry guava (*Psidium cattleianum*), a serious weed threatening the native forests of the Cook Islands.

### How effective is the strawberry guava scale insect?

It is too early to assess the impact of the scale in Rarotonga although trials conducted at the Ministry of Agriculture in Arorangi indicate that the scale can greatly reduce the vigour and competitive ability of heavily infested plants.



*Leaves infested with strawberry guava scale have distinctive galls.*

### How can I find strawberry guava scale insects?

The scale insect is very small and not easily seen with the naked eye. Its presence can be confirmed for the presence of lumps (galls) up to 8mm in diameter protruding from both sides of the leaf. Female galls are broadly conical, whereas male galls are smaller, pointed and narrower. Both have openings at maturity for emergence of offspring or males. The females remain inside the galls throughout their life.

### How do strawberry guava scale insects disperse?

Dispersal occurs at the first instar 'crawler' stage. Sometimes crawlers 'hitch-hike' between plants on animals such as birds or bats.



*The scale is small (<2mm) and protected by the galls.*

### Will the strawberry guava scale insects attack other plants?

No. Extensive testing has shown that the scale does not attack common guava and it has previously been introduced into Hawai'i and established with no unanticipated negative consequences.

### How do I move strawberry guava scale to a new site?

Further manual distribution is required to speed the rate of establishment on Rarotonga and on the other islands where strawberry guava is present, once appropriate approvals have been obtained. Scale insects can be moved on leaves or a small branch containing mature galls and attaching them to unaffected strawberry guava trees with cotton or string. It is best to attach them to actively growing tips of trees in full sunlight as they will establish better than on shaded trees.

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