



# Agriculture, Weights & Measures

## ⚠️ PEST ALERT ⚠️

### SOUTH AMERICAN PALM WEEVIL

*Rhynchophorus palmarum* Linneaus



Figure 1. Top and side views of a South American palm weevil adult male.

### PEST BIOLOGY

The South American palm weevil (SAPW) is an invasive beetle that infests and kills palm trees. Adult weevils are approximately 1.5 inches long, all black in color, with a long, curved snout. Adult weevils can fly up to a mile a day. Adult weevils lay their eggs in the top crown of palm trees, where the hatched larva feed and bore through the crown of the tree, causing a great deal of damage. When ready to pupate, the larva makes a cocoon out of spent palm fibers, approximately 3 inches long and 1 inch wide, from which it emerges as an adult weevil that lives for 30 to 60 days.

### A THREAT TO OUR PALM TREES

SAPW attacks the crown of palm trees, making them unable to produce new fronds. An untreated infested palm tree will ultimately die, while serving as a breeding ground for more weevils. SAPW puts the iconic California palm landscape at risk, while also jeopardizing the nearly \$150 million date fruit and ornamental palm nursery industries. Dead and dying palms also present a significant safety hazard, as the structural integrity of palm tree fails. The preferred hosts of the SAPW are Canary Island date palms (*Phoenix canariensis*) and commercial Date palms (*Phoenix dactylifera*), however most palm species are susceptible to this pest.



Figure 2. (Left) A healthy palm with a full canopy (Middle) An infested palm with crown failure (Right) A completely dead palm.



Scan here for additional  
information about this pest.

Together we can prevent this  
invasive and destructive pest  
from establishing in Orange  
County and throughout the  
rest of California.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

### Monitor for Signs and Symptoms

- ▶ Yellowing foliage, beginning at the topmost fronds.
- ▶ Flattening of palm canopy at the top of the crown.
- ▶ Notching in the newer fronds.
- ▶ Holes and tunneling at the base of the fronds.
- ▶ Pupal cocoons that have fallen near the base of the tree.

### Management Strategies

Avoid elective pruning and cutting of palm trees between April and October. Pruning fronds and shaving trunks releases volatile compounds that can attract SAPW adults to the palm. Consider consulting a professional arborist or licensed pest control business about a treatment program and other best management practices to safeguard palms against infestation. Treat infested palms immediately, even if they are scheduled for removal, to prevent mature weevils from spreading. When removing infested palms, dispose of all palm parts by chipping or immediately deep burial at a landfill to prevent further spread of the various life stages of this pest.



Figure 3. A SAPW larva nearly ready to pupate.



Figure 4. A pupal case spun from spent palm fibers.



## REPORT THIS PEST



Please immediately report any suspected SAPW infestations or sightings of this weevil to the Orange County Agricultural Commissioner's Office.

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