SUGARCANE APHIDS IN FLORIDA¹

(HOMOPTERA: APHIDIDAE)

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INTRODUCTION: There are 2 species of aphids that infest sugarcane in Florida. The yellow sugarcane aphid, *Sipha flava* (Forbes) and the sugarcane aphid, *Melanaphis sacchari* (Zehntner). Forbes described *Chaitophorus flavus* (1884) from sorghum at Champaign, Illinois. It has been a pest of sugarcane in Florida for many years. Forbes reported it as the yellow sorghum plant louse. Zehntner described *Aphis sacchari* from sugarcane in Java (1897). It was first collected in Florida at Belle Glade in 1977 on sugarcane. Measurements are in mm.


*Sipha flava*: North America, north as far as New York State in the east and Washington in the west; Caribbean, and Central and South America.

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Fig. 1a. *Melanaphis sacchari.*
Photo by Dr. Tom Summers

Fig. 1b. *Sipha flava.*
Photo by Dr. Tom Summers

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HOSTS: *Melanaphis sacchari*: Gramineae, especially *Sorghum* and *Saccharum*; also sometimes on *Echinochloa*, *Oryza*, *Panicum*, and *Pennisetum*.

*Sipha flava*: Gramineae including *Digitaria*, *Hordeum*, *Panicum*, *Paspalum*, *Saccharum*, *Sorghum*, and *Triticum*.

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE: *Melanaphis sacchari*: A vector of the persistent virus millet red leaf, but apparently unable to transmit sugarcane mosaic.

*Sipha flava*: A known vector of sugarcane mosaic virus. They occur in large colonies on leaf blades of their hosts.

DESCRIPTION: *Melanaphis sacchari*: This is a small, ant-attended aphid, variable in color according to host plant and environmental conditions. It is yellowish-green under Florida conditions on sugarcane (Fig. 1a). It may be pale yellow, yellow brown, purple, or even pinkish. Apterai and alatae 1.1-2.0 with variable dorsal markings on the abdomen.

*Sipha flava*: The apterai are small, yellow (Fig. 1b) to green in cooler temperatures, with numerous long bristle-like hairs on the body with dusky transverse markings on the dorsum. Alates have a yellow abdomen with various dorsal dark markings. Apterai and alatae 1.3 to 2.0.

CONTROL: Only a few requests have been received for the control of these 2 species of aphids. There is predation and parasitism of each species. The Department of Entomology and Nematology, University of Florida, recommends Diazinon, Dimethoate, Di-syston, Malathion, Metasystox-R, Phosdrin, and Thimet for the control of aphids. Follow the label instructions.

LITERATURE CITED:

