



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT of
AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY

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Commissioner

PEST: Cactus Moth (*Cactoblastis cactorum*)

BASIC PROFILE: *Cactoblastis* is a moth pest that attacks prickly pear cactus plants and may be considered an ornamental pest. Eggs laid on the cactus pads produce larvae that bore into the tissue, hollowing out the pad. Larvae are orange and black; adults are brownish-gray moths with a 30-35mm (~1 3/8 inch) wingspan. Symptoms include yellowing of plant tissue, oozing fluid and insect frass (droppings). Damaged pads shrivel and die. *Cactoblastis* spreads through natural movement along the Gulf Coast.

LDAF ACTIVITY: *Cactoblastis* has been found on the Louisiana coast and surveys for insects and damage are ongoing. Survey is done visually, focusing on characteristic cactus pad damage. Survey usually is accomplished by selecting high-risk areas (with cactus) either along the coast or in ornamental plantings. There is a federal quarantine restricting cactus movement and there are federal protocols for survey and response.

