

Checkered Melon Beetle

Scientific Name: *Paranapiacaba tricincta*
(Say)

Order: Coleoptera (Beetles)

Family: Chrysomelidae (Leaf Beetles)



Figure 1. Checkered melon beetle.

Identification and Descriptive Features: The checkered melon beetle is a prominently marked beetle of moderate size (6-7 mm). The wing covers of the adult are primarily black and white in roughly rectangular markings. The prothorax is orange and head is black.

Distribution in Colorado: The checkered melon beetle is a common and sometimes abundant insect in southeastern Colorado. In recent years large numbers of this species have been observed in Larimer County, which may be due to a range extension. *Paranapiacaba tricincta* occurs in much of the southwestern US, including southwestern Colorado, and is the northernmost representative of the genus.

Life History and Habits: The life history of this species is very poorly understood. The presence of adults early in the growing season and in early October suggest that overwintering is in the adult form.

The adult insects feed on leaves of cucurbits and commonly visit flowers of a wide variety of plants. During outbreak years, significant crop damage has been observed to occur to some cucurbit crops grown in the Arkansas Valley, particularly seedling honeydew (*Cucurbita melo*) and kabocha squash (*Cucurbita maxima*). The checkered melon beetle is also very commonly associated with buffalo gourd, *Cucurbita foetidissima*, a perennial wild cucurbit.

Larvae develop in soil but larval hosts are undescribed. Apparently they are capable of developing on cucurbits but the occurrence of this insect in cucurbit-free areas suggest that it may



Figure 2. Checkered melon beetle damage to honeydew.

have a wide host range that could include perennial grasses. Such a broad host range does occur with the southern corn rootworm/spotted cucumber beetle, *Diabrotica undecimpunctata howardi* Barber, a related species with which the checkered melon beetle is commonly associated in southeastern Colorado.

Adults visit many types of flowers during midsummer and are particularly common on sunflowers. No damage appears to be done to flowers, suggesting that pollen is eaten

Checkered melon beetle populations can vary greatly between seasons. Wet spring weather seems to be associated with higher numbers of the insect being present in late spring and early summer.



Figure 3. Checkered melon beetle and southern corn rootworm in mixed population on buffalo gourd..