

Onion

Pests

Onion Thrips (*Thrips tabaci*):



Thrips are the most important insect pests on onions. Adults are yellowish to yellowish brown with narrow wings. Eggs are laid in clusters in leaf tissues. Numerous nymphs and adults are observed between leaf sheaths and stems lacerating the epidermis of leaves and sucking the exuding cell sap. The affected leaves show silvery blotches which later turn into brownish colour.

The leaves get distorted from tips downwards and plant ultimately wilt and dry away. Seedlings are killed due to heavy infestation and the plant growth is retarded. The shape and size of bulbs as well as yield is affected by thrips.

Control: Soil application of Phorate or Carbofuran granules (1kg a.i./ha) is also recommended. Alternate spraying of 0.07% Endosulphan (2ml/litre of water), or 0.07% Nuvacron (2ml/litre of water) or 0.01% Cypermethrin (1ml/litre of water) along with a sticker (Triton or Sandovit) at fortnightly intervals controls the insect.

Head Borer (*Helicoverpa armigera*):

The head borer is a serious pest of onion seed crop in Northern India. The larva of this insect cuts the pedicel of the flower and feeds on the stalk. Single larva damages many flower stalks. The fully-grown larva is greenish with dark brown grey lines along the side of body and measures about 35-45 mm in length.

Control: Spraying Endosulfan (2-3 ml/litre of water) along with sticker (Triton/ Sandovit) is recommended to control the insect.

Onion Maggot (*Hylemia antiqua*):

The adults of the insect appear like housefly. The flies lay their eggs on old leaves or on soil and larva enters into soil and damage disc portion of onion bulb. Infested plants turn yellowish brown and finally dry up. The affected bulbs rot in storage.

Control: Regular crop rotation should be followed and Thimet should be applied in the soil before transplanting.

Cutworms (*Agrotis ipsilon*):

The larvae of this insect are seen in nursery beds and newly transplanted onion fields. The tender plants are found damped at ground level during the night. Young larvae feed gregariously on foliage but later segregate and enter into soil. Young larvae are yellowish grey and later on become brown, greasy to touch and coil when disturbed. They cut the seedlings at ground level during night and hide during day.

Control: Soil application of Carbofuran (1kg a.i./ha) at the time of planting is recommended. Chlorpyrifos (5ml/litre of water) also gives good control of this pest.