

Taro Hornworm/Taro Hawkmoth (*Hippotion celerio* L.)

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Adult female taro horn worms (*Hippotion celerio* L.) (Lepidoptera: Sphingidae) lay eggs singly on taro leaves. When the egg hatches, a small green caterpillar emerges which has a distinctive reddish horn on its posterior end. The caterpillar eats large holes in the leaf, usually starting at the outer edge of the leaf. Older larvae grow to 80 millimeters long (about as long as a man's finger) and are green with a white stripe along each side. They have a spot which resembles an eye on each side of the anterior end and have a horn on the posterior end. When fully grown, they leave the plant and pupate in the soil. Their life cycle takes about a month to complete.

The caterpillars feed on a variety of plants in the taro family. These include *Colocasia taro*, *Alocasia taro* and also various ornamental plants such as *Caladium* and *Amorphophallus*. Young taro plants may be killed, although the older plants usually only lose a leaf or two.

Control

Surveying fields weekly and handpicking caterpillars is usually an effective means of control. Several parasites and predators attack these insects. In the Marianas, most eggs are killed by the parasite *Trichogramma chilonis*. Elsewhere in the Pacific, parasites such as a species of *Palexorista* (Diptera: Tachinidae), which is found in the Solomons, attack the larval stage. Predaceous shield bugs and toads have also been observed feeding on the



Caterpillar stage



Adult stage

larvae.

If the use of chemicals is required or if additional information is desired, consult an Extension Agent at your local land grant institution. On Guam, you may also consult the Guam Fruit and Vegetable Pesticide Guide for current recommendations and permissible uses.

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