



## Bug of the week



The aphid mummy parasitoid (*Lysiphlebus testaceipes*) is not the typical wasp that you may see around your house or garden in the Cook Islands. This small (2 mm long) wasp is a natural enemy that parasitizes aphids but is more likely to be detected as beige/brown 'mummified' aphids amongst living aphids on a leaf. The female wasp lays a single egg in each aphid it parasitises and after a few days the very small larvae hatches and starts feeding on the live aphid from within. The wasp larva takes about 6-8 days to finish eating the aphid and during this time the aphid will change into a brown rugby ball shape, known as an aphid mummy.



Live green cabbage aphids and parasitized brown aphid mummies (left) and close-up of parasitized aphid mummies (right) (photos: Mike Bowie)

The larva pupates within the mummy and after 4-5 days the wasp emerges by cutting a circular hole in the mummy to fly off to mate and parasitise more aphids. The complete lifecycle from egg to adult depends on temperature, but takes about 14 days at 21°C. Another species of aphid mummy wasp (*Aphelinus* sp.) was introduced to the Cook Islands way back in 1928-29 and 1941 by New Zealand entomologists.



Aphid mummy with circular escape hatch (left), aphid mummy parasitoid (*Lysiphlebus testaceipes*) (right) (photos: Mike Bowie)

These parasitoids are very effective at controlling the aphid numbers, so if you see lots of brown aphid mummies on your leaves, then let them do their good work. If you need to spray, then use an oil such as Neem or D-C-Tron for aphids and this will have minimal effect on these beneficial wasps and other natural enemies.

