



Bug of the week

The **Green Vegetable Bug** (*Nezara viridula*) is a cosmopolitan pest species thought to have originated in Ethiopia. Adults are most commonly bright green but other rare orange, yellow or pink colour morphs have been recorded.



Figure 1: Adult Green Vegetable Bug (photo: Mike Bowie)

Adults (Figure 1) measure 12-13mm in length. Younger nymphs are a variety of colours, including black, brown, yellow, green and red, with rows of white spots. The green vegetable bug is polyphagous (feeds on many plant species), and is known to forage on at least 30 plant families, but has a preference for legumes. Females can lay up to 130 eggs in one batch, which are glued to the underside of leaves. The barrel-shaped eggs are cream to yellow initially but darken towards maturation after 5-21 days, depending on temperature. One generation can be as short as 35 days and as many as four generations can occur in one year.

Younger nymphs (Figure 2) are known to form clusters as a defense strategy against predators such as ants.



Figure 2: Two young Green Vegetable Bug nymphs (photos: Mike Bowie)

Both nymphs and adults cause damage through sucking sap from leaves, stems, and fruits. A small parasitoid wasp (*Trissolcus basalis*) is known to attack eggs of the green vegetable bug in New Zealand and Australia, and may well be in here according to the Cook Islands Biodiversity and Ethnology Database. More entomological research is required to confirm the presence of the correct wasp species to keep the green vegetable bug in check.

