

## Abstract

A survey was undertaken to determine the pest status of herbivorous blister beetles, *hycleus* spp., in western kenya where they attack crops such as *desmodium* spp., other leguminous plants and sweetpotato. *desmodium* spp. are important intercrops in the 'push-pull' strategy adopted for *striga* and stemborer control in maize and sorghum. production of *desmodium* seed is adversely affected by blister beetles, which feed on the flowers and negatively affect seed setting. to assess farmers' knowledge and perceptions of *hycleus* spp. as pests, a questionnaire survey was conducted in three sites in bungoma district, western kenya, in 2007. the survey was followed by field sampling of *desmodium* spp. and sweetpotato to compare the results with the responses received from farmers. *hycleus* spp. were mentioned by 75% of the respondents as major pests of *desmodium* spp. during field sampling *hycleus* spp. comprised 70% of the insect pests collected. according to farmers, blister beetles were more abundant on *desmodium* than on sweetpotato. however, field sampling revealed that differences in beetle abundance on the two crops were not consistent across different sites, suggesting that these crops may function as alternative hosts. the study provides baseline information for the development of a management strategy for blister beetles.