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UOG researchers take part in confab on rhino beetles

By Press Release | Posted on Sep 14 2018
Tag: Aubrey Moore, Guam, Papua New Guinea, UOG



Researchers from Cooperative Extension & Outreach at the University of Guam recently participated in a Pacific-wide discussion on a new type of coconut rhinoceros beetle that is killing coconut and oil palms in Guam, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and other islands of the Pacific.



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A symposium titled "The challenge of CRB-G to palm production in the Pacific and prospects for microbial control" featured the university's Aubrey Moore, Jim Grasela, Roland Quitugua, and Ian Iriarte. The discussion took place at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Invertebrate Pathology in Gold Coast, Australia in August 2018.

"In Guam, the beetle escaped control following damage caused by Typhoon Dolphin in 2015, which left large numbers of CRB-G breeding sites in the form of piles of decaying vegetation," said Dr. Aubrey Moore, associate professor of entomology. "The control on Guam will only be possible with the introduction of a self-replicating, density-dependent biocontrol agent."

Outbreaks of CRB-G are out of control in Guam, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands, and this problematic biotype is spreading to other islands. Other coconut rhinoceros beetle biotypes can be effectively controlled by introducing a naturally occurring virus that only attacks rhino beetles. Unfortunately, CRB-G is resistant to all available isolates of this virus.

The scientists agreed that the most feasible way to stop CRB-G from killing palms and spreading to other islands is to find a new isolate of the biocontrol virus that attacks CRB-G and will collaborate on the search for this virus. (UOG)

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