

**Statement in relation to the DoA's 2026 Integrated
management Programme to Control Spiral Whitefly
(Aleurodicus Dispersus)**

**Third Meeting of the 2025/2026 Session
of the Cayman Islands Parliament**

By the Honourable Johany "Jay" Ebanks, MP

**Minister of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and
Infrastructure**

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management Programme to Control Spiral Whitefly
(Aleurodicus Dispersus)*

30th April 2026

Mister Speaker,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to bring to the attention of this Honourable House, the ongoing actions being undertaken by the Department of Agriculture in relation to the control and management of the recent surge in spiral whitefly.

Mister Speaker, spiral whitefly is an invasive sap sucking insect pest that can be a significant threat to agricultural crop production and productivity if left unchecked. The pest has shown to be a very prolific one with rapid population growth, high dispersal capability along with the capability to infest a wide range of plants. It does not seem to have a preferred host and as such the unique identifying egg ring markings has been identified on different plant species, indicating that it is not host specific.

The current programme undertaken by the Department of Agriculture outlines a structured intervention strategy to manage and suppress the burgeoning spiral whitefly population, through an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Framework. The approach combines monitoring of the environment, cultural practices and targeted chemical

control using specific chemicals to achieve population suppression and long-term control.

Mister Speaker, recent observations in Grand Cayman indicate a population explosion of Spiral whitefly (*Aleurodicus disperses*) across multiple locations. The problem is seen especially in the Bodden Town Savannah/Newlands area. The rapid reproductive cycle and unavailability of known natural enemies has resulted in the widespread colonization. Without this strategic coordinated and timely intervention, the population growth will continue unchecked and ultimately will result in:

- Decline in crop health and productivity of affected crops
- Further spread to unaffected farms, homesteads and urban centers
- Increased cost to farmers and affected stakeholders
- Environmental degradation as a result of the pest spread and/or potential overuse of pesticides.

Mister Speaker, the spiral whitefly is easily identified by the distinct spiral pattern in which the eggs are laid on the underside of the affected plant leaves. The life cycle of the

pest includes eggs, nymphal stages, and adult phases. The nymphs are sessile and feed on plant sap while the adults are very mobile and contribute to rapid dispersal by flying or hitchhiking and being blown in the wind.

The spiral whitefly host range appears to be none specific as it affects both agricultural and non-agricultural plant species. Commonly affected host observed at this time are

- coconut and other palms (most affected)
- Vegetable crops (affected by the honey dew and sooty mold)
- Fruit trees such as guava, mango, citrus, avocado and even Musa species (bananas and plantain)

Mister Speaker, ornamental plants affected includes sea grapes, coco plum, ficus and just about any flowering shrubs and shade trees. Almost every plant within the affected areas have been a reservoir for the pest. Due to the wide host range, it will complicate the management efforts and facilitates the rapid spread across the environment.

Mister Speaker, the severity of spiral whitefly or any other similar pest infestation can lead to significant reduction in crop yield and quality due to the feeding mechanism. The

fly feed by extracting sap from the plant resulting in plant stress and lack of vigor. The result in premature leaf drop and reduced photosynthesis due to sooty mold accumulation of the leaf surfaces. In very severe cases, prolonged infestation can result in death of the plants especially young or stressed plant life.

Mister Speaker, sooty mold is a resultant feature of the spiral whitefly feeding habits. This growth of sooty mold affects the overall health of plants, may cause suppression of natural enemies and hence creates an imbalance in the natural ecosystem.

In addition Mister Speaker, due to the excessive development of sooty mold and the heavy secretion of honey dew, there is decline in the aesthetic value or ornamental plants and greenery. There is also the public nuisance issue as honey dew is deposited on buildings surfaces, cars and outdoor furniture.

Mister Speaker, to address this issue the Department of Agriculture supported by the Ministry, the Government, and myself have begun the Integrated Pest Management. The programme kicked-off on 14 April with a public

meeting held at the Department of Agriculture as well as via zoom.

At the meeting vital information on identifying and treating the spiral white fly was shared with the public. Mister Speaker as I set out details of the actions being undertaken I first want to make clear that it will be impossible for the Department to spray all affected areas and as such we are calling on affected persons to also engage with the Department to understand methods of treatments that they can undertake.

Mister Speaker, the programme by the Department of Agriculture is to run from April to June. It will include:

- Phase 1 – Assessment: Assessment and identification of the affected areas and host plants.
- Phase 2 – Initial Intervention: Recommend cultural control to be done by the affected stakeholder and DOA will intervene with the initial chemical application as specified
- Phase 3 - Follow up Monitoring: The DOA will do continued monitoring of the targeted areas and

additional treatments applied as needed based on existing population levels.

- Phase 4 - Evaluation and Adjustments: Assessment and closure of the programme's effectiveness and adjustment of pest management strategies based on observed outcome.

Mister Speaker, the DOA intends to apply intervention (i.e. spraying of the white flies in high density areas) strategy to decrease the prevalence of the whitefly population which currently poses a significant threat to the agriculture sector and general landscapes.

With the cooperation of stakeholders and proper implementation, it is anticipated that the spiral whitefly population can be suppressed and kept in check at manageable levels. The successful implementation will be based on stakeholder engagement, weather conditions, operational capacity and the severity of the spread of the white fly population.

Mister Speaker in addition the Department is collaborating with organisations regionally and internationally to research

potential biological controls, that is natural predators, which would help manage the spiral white fly population.

In closing Mister Speaker I want to note that spiral white fly is not uncommon to the Cayman Islands however the size of this current spread has led to these actions. I will provide a further update to this Honourable Parliament following the completion of this programme in June 2026.