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Fla. Dept. of Agric. & Consumer Services
Division of Plant Industry

OPUNTIASPIS PHILOCOCCUS (COCKERELL) (HOMOPTERA:COCCOIDEA:DIASPIDIDAE)[1]

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INTRODUCTION: *Opuntiaspis philococcus* (Cockerell) was originally described as *Mytilaspis philococcus* by Cockerell (1893:252) on cactus from Mexico. The taxonomy of this genus is somewhat unstable, but it appears there are possibly 3 species; *Opuntiaspis carinata* (Cockerell) which occurs on *Beaucarnea recurvata* Lem. in Florida (Hamon 1978), *O. javanensis* Green on *Xanthorrhoea arborea* R. Br. (These specimens have more dorsal macroducts than type material, personal communication from Steve Nakahara.) collected once in Florida, and *O. philococcus* on cactus has been intercepted recently by the Division of Plant Industry.

DESCRIPTION: The female armor (fig. 1 & 2) is white to gray, with a slight longitudinal ridge, and a flat margin. The exuviae are yellowish brown and terminal. Female armor is 3.5-4 mm long by 1.5-2.0 mm wide. Males are similar to females but smaller.

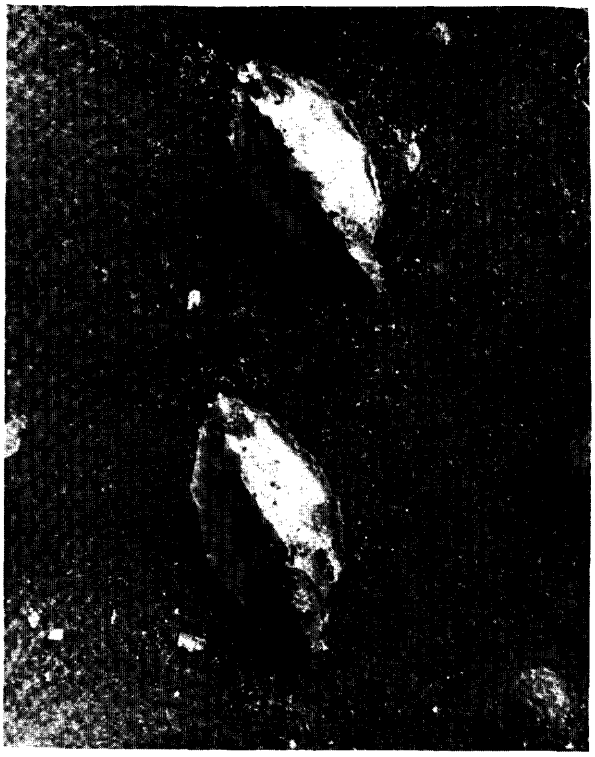

Fig. 1. *Opuntiaspis philococcus*, adult female armor (9X)

Fig. 2. *Opuntiaspis philococcus* on *Lemaireocereus marginatus*, (life-size)

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SURVEY AND DETECTION:

1. Scales may be found throughout the year on cacti imported from Mexico.

2. Inspect all aerial parts of plants.

3. Submit adult female specimens, on the host, in a double plastic bag. Try to determine if specimens are alive or dead, if they have been fumigated, and point of origin.

DISTRIBUTION: Known from Mexico and intercepted by the Division of Plant Industry in Florida.

HOSTS: This scale insect was intercepted in Florida on giant star cactus, *Lemaireocereus marginatus (DC.)* Backeb & F. M. Knuth and blue-candle cactus, *Myrtillocactus geometrizans* (Mart. ex. Pfeiff.) Console. Ferris (1937:SI-81) reported a Japan interception on *Zamia sp.* from Mexico. Borchsenius (1966:30) reported *Opuntia* as a host.

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE: The economic importance is unknown at this time, and no indications of damage are noted in the literature; however, scale insects have the potential of causing economic damage because of their plant parasitic nature.

LITERATURE CITED:

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Hamon, A. B. 1978. *Opuntiaspis carinata* (Cockerell) (Homoptera:Coccoidea: Diaspididae). Ent. Cir. No. 196. Div. of Plant Industry, Fla. Dept. Agric. and Consumer Services. 1 p., illus.