

Franklinothrips vespiformis



Distinguishing features

Female macropterous, with wasp-like waist. Body, legs and antennae mostly brown, abdominal segments II–III sharply yellow with anterior margins variably brown, X yellowish in contrast to IX; antennal segments I–III yellow; femoral apices often yellowish; fore wing banded, brown with small sub-basal pale area, medially with broad pale area, also an indistinct sub-apical pale area. Head broadly recessed into anterior margin of pronotum. Antennae 9-segmented, unusually elongate; III about 8 times as long as wide with long sensory area formed of irregular scallops. Mesonotum without sculpture on anterior half. Metanotum with no sculpture medially. Fore wing slender with apex rounded. Abdominal tergite I anterior margin strongly constricted, tergites lacking sculpture; sternites IV–VI each with two pairs of marginal setae and two pairs of setae laterally on discal area.



Female



Antennal segments I-V



Antennal segment IV



Meso & metanotum



Sternites VI–VII



Fore wing

Related species

Currently 14 species are placed in the genus *Franklinothrips*, all from tropical and subtropical countries, although more undescribed species are known from Southeast Asia (Mound & Reynaud, 2005). Particularly similar in structure to *F. vespiformis* is the Central American species *F. orizabensis*, but that has the fore wings rather broader at the apex and without a pale sub-apical area.

Biological data

Species of *Franklinothrips* are known as predators of various small insects (Hoddle 2003a, 2003b). *F. vespiformis* is usually collected from low-growing plants, where adults and larvae are fast moving, ant-mimicking predators of small arthropods such as thrips larvae. The larvae are red with a characteristic hump-backed appearance due to the swollen pterothorax (Mound & Reynaud, 2005). Pupation occurs at ground level in a silken pupal cocoon that the second instar larvae spin.

Distribution data

Presumably originally from the Caribbean or Central American region, this species has been recorded widely around the world in tropical countries, including northeastern Queensland and the Torres Straits Islands, and also Kununurra in the north of Western Australia.

Family name

AEOLOTHRIPIDAE

Species name

Franklinothrips vespiformis (Crawford DL)

Original name and synonyms

Aeolothrips vespiformis Crawford DL, 1909: 109

References

Hoddle MS (2003a) The effect of prey species and environmental complexity on the functional response of *Franklinothrips orizabensis*: a test of the fractal foraging model. *Ecological Entomology* 28: 309–318.

Hoddle MS (2003b) Predation behaviours of *Franklinothrips orizabensis* (Thysanoptera: Aeolothripidae) towards *Scirtothrips perseae* and *Heliothrips haemorrhoidalis* (Thysanoptera: Thripidae). *Biological Control* 27: 323–328.

Mound LA & Reynaud P (2005) *Franklinothrips*, a pantropical Thysanoptera genus of ant-mimicking obligate predators (Aeolothripidae). *Zootaxa* **864**: 1–16.