

# In S Goa, rindworm infestation damages watermelons

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Panaji:** Watermelon farmers of Verna and surrounding villages in South Goa are grappling with rindworm pest infestation.

Officers of the Goa State Horticulture Corporation and directorate of agriculture were informed about the infestation.

The zonal agricultural officer (ZAO) inspected the fields and guided the farmers on preventive measures to be taken up.

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mers were unable to identify the problem until much later. This time, they have paid attention and have started taking up preventive measures in the initial stages of the infestation. This will help them salvage the crop," horticulture officer Dattaprasad Desai said.

On Monday, faculty from the Don Bosco College of Agriculture, Sulcorna, Rajan Shelke and Professor Satish Patil, visited the watermelon fields. During inspection, they noticed green coloured larvae scraping the outer green layer of the fruit rind.

This scraping has resul-

ted in green to greyish blotches on the fruits, they said.

The experts said there are various reasons for the pest infestation, like climatic conditions, poor weed management, monocropping, late sowing, planting of susceptible varieties and poor knowledge on pest identification and management among the farmers.

The larvae of the rindworm have been collected and brought to the institute's laboratory for study.

They educated the farmers on how rindworms develop, its appearance and feeding habit, symptoms of da-

mage to the crop and management strategies.

The farmers have been advised to conduct physical monitoring of incidence of the watermelon rindworm in the fields as it is "not attracted to light traps."

For biological control, they have been advised to apply bacterial insecticide *Bacillus thuringiensis* to reduce the incidence of the pest, spray a suspension of entomopathogenic fungi *Beauveria bassiana* and install bird perches.

They have also been advised to spray insecticides only on watermelon leaves.