

## Harrisia Cactus Mealybug (*Hypogeococcus pungens*)

**Distribution:** Native to South America. Introduced into Australia, Caribbean Basin, South Africa, and southern Europe. In the U.S.: established in FL and HI. In California it was found in the nurseries and in a residential area on cacti planted outdoors (under eradication).

**Hosts and damage:** Serious pest of various species of cacti (recorded on the hosts from genera *Cereus*, *Cleistocactus*, *Eriocereus*, *Harrisia*, *Hickenia*, *Parodia*, etc.). Observed also infesting plants from genera *Acalypha*, *Achyranthes*, *Althernanthera*, *Gomphrena*, *Hibiscus* and *Portulaca*. May attack above ground parts (commonly found around the bases of spines) and roots of cacti. Heavy infestations often distort host plants and may stunt their growth. This mealybug has been successfully used as a biological control agent of invasive cacti in Australia and South Africa.

**Field ID:** **Adult females** (about 3 mm long) have oval, pinkish-red bodies with no marginal wax filaments. They produce significant amounts of white wax that often covers their bodies. **Males** have pinkish bodies and grayish-white translucent wings.



Infested cacti



Adult female (with wax removed) and a nymph



Male