

SEASONAL EFFECT ON INFECTION BY COCONUT STEM BLEEDING PATHOGEN, *THIELAVIOPSIS PARADOXA*

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STEM bleeding is an important disease of coconut which has been reported from almost all coconut-growing countries^{1,2}. Recently, involvement of *Thielaviopsis paradoxa* (de Seynes) Von Hohnel as a primary causative agent of the disease has been established³. There is no information on the effect of different seasons on infection by this pathogen. Hence the present study was undertaken and the results are presented in this paper.

T. paradoxa isolated from the affected trunk of coconut was inoculated on the trunk, at about 75 cm height from the ground, using inoculum grown on 2 cm long bits of sterilized coconut rachis³. An uninoculated bore-hole made on the opposite side of the inoculated trunk served as the control. A total of

29 palms including both West Coast Tall (WCT) and Chowghat Orange Dwarf (COD) were inoculated at CPCRI Farm during different months and periodically observed for symptom production. The observations on depth and size of lesion as recorded in December, 1987 are presented in table 1.

When the amount of decay in young WCT palms inoculated at different periods was compared, the maximum lesion depth/size was recorded in palms inoculated during or after monsoon (July to November). The lesion size was comparatively less in palms inoculated during April-May.

Young WCT palms (10-12 years) showed generally more internal decay as compared to 45-60 year-old palms. The infection progressed up to a depth of 7-7.5 cm in young palms inoculated during July-November as against 5.5 cm in old palms after 24 months of inoculation. The lesion size for both age groups, however, did not vary much. The infection was rather low and delayed during summer months. In general, the extent of decay increased with progress of time.

When young palms of WCT and COD inoculated in April 1987 were compared, the size and depth of

Table 1 Lesion size and depth in coconut stem (West Coast Tall variety) of different ages, inoculated with *Thielaviopsis paradoxa* during different periods

Date of inoculation	Months after which observations were taken*	Palms of 10-12 years				Palms of 45-60 years			
		Palm no.	Duration (months) for appearance of first symptoms	Lesion depth (cm)	Lesion size (cm)	Palm no.	Duration (months) for appearance of first symptoms	Lesion depth (cm)	Lesion size (cm)
26.11.1985	24		Not inoculated			1 } 2 } 3 } 4 }	1½-2	4.5 3.5 5.5 4.5	7 × 3 5 × 2.5 17 × 3 12 × 2
28.4.1986	20		Not inoculated		1 2			0 0	0 × 0 0 × 0
29.5.1986	19	1 } 2 }	6	2.5 3.0	4 × 2.5 4 × 2.0	1 } 2 }	6-8	0.5 2	4 × 2.5 3.5 × 2.5
31.7.1986	17	1 } 2 }	2	4.0 0.5	6.5 × 2.5 7.5 × 2.5	1 } 2 }	2	3.5 5	5 × 2.5 7 × 3.5
27.9.1986	15	1 } 2 }	1½-2	6 3	7 × 2 5 × 2.5				Not inoculated
29.11.1986	13	1 } 2 }	2	7 7	7 × 2 5 × 2	1 } 2 } 3 }	2-2½	2 3 2	5.5 × 2 12 × 6 5.5 × 2.5
6.4.1987	9	1 } 2 } 3** } 4** }	6-7	3.5 2 2 1.5	4.5 × 2 3 × 2.5 3 × 2 3.5 × 2				Not inoculated
4.7.1987	6	1 } 2 }	2	3 3	3.5 × 2.5 3 × 2	1 } 2 }	2-2½	3 4	2.5 × 2 4.5 × 2.5

*Observations were taken on 22 December 1987; **Chowghat Orange Dwarf.

Table 2 Meteorological data (mean temperature and relative humidity) during the period of the experiment

Month	Temperature (°C)		Relative humidity range (%)
	Minimum	Maximum	
November 1985	21.5	32.9	59-89
January 1986	20.0	32.8	53-85
April '86	25.1	34.0	62-83
May '86	25.8	34.0	61-79
July '86	23.5	30.1	78-92
September '86	22.9	30.0	75-93
November '86	21.9	31.9	64-88
January 1987	20.0	32.9	47-82
April '87	24.9	33.9	59-80
July '87	24.3	31.2	74-87
December '87	21.2	33.7	52-80

since the number of dwarf palms inoculated was inadequate.

The results thus showed that the establishment of infection was quicker and the decay was more in palms inoculated during July–November irrespective

lesion were slightly more in the former variety. But this requires confirmation by testing more palms of the age of the test palms. Young palms tend to be more susceptible than the older ones. Enhanced decay in palms inoculated in July–November may be due to prevalence of high humidity and comparatively moderate temperature during this period (table 2). The present finding is significant in the context of standardizing techniques for screening coconut germ plasm for resistance to stem bleeding disease.

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