RESEARCH NOTE

INCIDENCE OF ACANTHOPSYCHE (PTEROMA) PLAGZOPHLEPS ON ARECANUT

Compared to other pests. the damage caused by hag worms to trees and other crops is of minor nature. However, they have been found to attack fruit and shade trees (Frost, 1959). Nair and Menon (1963), have recorded *Cryptothelia thyridopterex* species as minor pest on arecanut. *Acathopsyche* (pteroma) *progiophleps,* Hampson, a new species of bag worm made its appearance at the Central Plantation Crops Research institute, Research Centre, Hirehalli on a pest scale severely damaging 3-5 years old arecanut seedlings. Its life history and the damage caused is repotted in this paper.

The eggs are laid by the female inside the bags. These eggs 8-12 in number are laid in a single mass. They are light yellowish brown when freshly laid and gradually turn to dark brown colour. By middle of July, they hatch out. The larva immediately on hatching, spins a case in which it lives throughout its life. The caterpillars are 12-14 mm in 'length and 3-4 mm thick, light brown in colour. with black spots on its head and thorax. The portion concealed inside the bag is however soft and light yellow in colour. The bag concealing the fully grown larvae measures 16-18 mm long and 5-6 mm thick and resembles a spindle with the dorsal end open.

The caterpillar infested young plants have their leaves and foliage very much ragged. Palms of 4-5 years age show the portion of the stem and the leaf sheath covering the stem just below the crown damaged. These damaged portions dry up and appear as blotches amidst green background which could be made out even from a distance. On the leaves the caterpillars feed on particular point continuously thus causing punctures. Young emerging spindle suffers similar type of damage. The caterpillars are active for a period of 30-40 days and then pupate inside the hags. Before pupation the worms attach their bags to the leaves with the help of strong, thick silken loop. The pupal period extends over a period of 18-21 days.

Control measur

Meclianical method of hand picking of bags during the winter is an effective method of controlling the pest. Spraying contact pesticide? is usually not advisable as the spray is unable to penetrate the covering. The pest could effectively be controlled by spraying 0.25% of systematic chemicals like Dimecron/Metasystox at an interval of 20-30 days, when the caterpillars arc active.

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