

Coconut Scale and its Control

The coconut scale which is entomologically termed *Aspidiotus destructor* is one of the major pests that causes considerable sporadic damage to coconut in Sri Lanka.

Under favourable conditions they multiply in large numbers and spread in plantations feeding from under side of leaves by sucking.

Normally the incidence of scale turns the leaves yellow. On an individual palm few leaves in the lower whorl may be infested and progressively proceeds on the neighbouring leaves thereby spreading the infestation, turning the entire foliage yellow.

Coconut leaves also turn yellow due to nutrient deficiencies as well as poor drainage. For correct identification of scale pest, a few yellowing leaves should be cut down and the underside should be examined. They could be easily examined with a hand lens, or if the white incrustations are seen and if such incrustations are crushed with a finger nail they will be watery to touch. Severe scale infestations, retard palm growth and reductions in yield would also occur

By Gamini Perera

Life cycle

Scale nymphs known as crawlers emerge from eggs found underneath the scaly covering and move on to the leaves. They feed by sucking and within two days get fixed on the underside of leaves and enclose their bodies with a scaly covering. The various stages of development of this insect are very minute and are not visible to the naked eye.

Control

In areas where reinfestation occur, effective control can be achieved by cutting and burning the infested leaves. But still in some areas where the pest has been present throughout the year there has been no fresh outbreaks. In such incidences control measures appear unnecessary and uneconomical too.

- (a) Please inform the Coconut Development Officer in your area no sooner an incidence is observed.
- (b) Control of this pest can be obtained with the naturally occurring parasites and predators.

In case of scale pest infestations in your land, first cut and examine one or two such fronds. You will then come across a small black roundish (like a pepper seed) insects known as the lady-bird beetles. These insects prey upon the scale pest thus controlling it.

Next Issue

The next issue of the Coconut Bulletin scheduled for May 1985, will be devoted to fertilizer. This issue will carry valuable information on fertilizer mixtures, field problems in fertilizer application and practices recommended to obtain the maximum return from fertilizer application.

Please reserve your copy early

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