

IF PALMS ARE TAPPED...

Mortality is observed in some palms that are being tapped for toddy. This is preceded by the withering of the entire foliage and the wilting of the crown. This has been attributed to many causes and one imputation by villagers is that when toddy so tapped flows back from the inflorescence to the crown, and the palm succumbs resultantly. But apart from such beliefs, there is also every possibility of serious Red Weevil attacks inflicted to the crown region, which render fatal thus causing the destruction.

A wound or an injury is necessary for Red Weevil to lay eggs. Correct identification of a Red Weevil damaged palm is a difficult task for a layman. But with experience, by keeping the ear on the trunk of the palm, and by examination of wounds, frass etc. one can be certain of the presence of this weevil grubs. When palms are being tapped, the fronds are subject to constant stress and strain as a result of which they break with the tapper's weight on them. If the injuries so caused are not treated with coal tar and these injuries invariably become egg laying sites of Red Weevil.

A number of inflorescences will have to be cut for one year tapping period. It is customary for some tappers to sever the already tapped inflorescence, while others leave them.

But to the portions of the exposed inflorescence, and the injuries caused to the bottom of the new one (bending while being tapped) no remedial or preventive measures are applied. Such injuries attract Red Weevil and thus palms are destroyed.

Similarly palms left unattended to after tapping also fall a prey to this weevil attack. Some tappers purposely trample the young inflorescences once the tapping period is over. Cracks and wounds thus made also attract Red Weevil.

From the above observations it can be construed that some tapping palms get destroyed due to the weevil attacks, and the presumption of palm mortality ascribed to the 'toddy flow back' impression appears very doubtful.

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