

New Records

**ON THE OCCURRENCE OF WHITE GRUB *SCHIZONYCHA RUFICOLLIS* F.
(MELOLONTHINAE SCARABAEIDAE COLEOPTERA) AS A PEST
OF SUGARCANE IN KERALA**

Schizonycha ruficollis F. is considered as a pest of sugarcane in Punjab and Gujarat. During a survey on the pest-complex of sugarcane in Kerala, drying of sugarcane seedlings in patches was noticed in several fields in the sugarcane tracts at Thiruvalla and Pandalam in Alleppey district. On closer examination it has been found that the damage to the seedlings was due to the attack of white grub, *S. ruficollis* F. The dried up seedlings could be easily uprooted with a slight pull. The root system of the seedling was completely eaten by the pest and a number of adult beetles and grubs were seen around the base of the infested plants. The incidence of the pest was observed in March-April on 1 to 3 month old seedlings and the infestation was more in irrigated fields.

The infested seedling first looks as though affected by drought with an initial yellowing of the leaves and drooping and drying of the inner spindle and consequent deterioration of maturing stalk (Figure 1)• The adults are chestnut coloured beetles about 15 mm in length and 6 mm broad with the elytra longitudinally striated and not covering the abdomen fully. Full grown larvae are dirty white, fleshy, curved, measuring about 40 mm in length and 8 mm in width. Grubs are highly destructive to the roots and rootlets, Pal (1977) recorded this as a major white grub species in Punjab and Gujarat infesting sugarcane, sorghum and lablab. The adult beetles attack fruit trees like citrus, guava, apple, peach and other plants like rose, *Cassia fistula*, *Prosopis cineraria*, *Bauhinia* spp. and *Tamarindus indica*. Batra *et al.* (1973) reported that the adults of *S. ruficollis* feed on grape vines during night. In severe infestation the entire vine may be defoliated and their damage is characterised by holes on the leaves.

This appears to be the first recorded occurrence of *S. ruficollis* F. on sugarcane in Kerala.

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സംഗ്രഹം

ഇളം പ്രായത്തിലുള്ള കരിമ്പു ചെടിയുടെ വേരുപടലങ്ങൾ തിന്നു ജീവിക്കുന്ന 'ഷൈസോനിക്കാ റൂഫിക്കോളിസ്' എന്ന ഒരു കീടം കേരളത്തിന്റെ ചില ഭാഗങ്ങളിൽ കരിമ്പു ചെടിയെ ആക്രമിക്കുന്നതായി കണ്ടു. വണ്ടുവർഗത്തിൽപ്പെട്ട കീടത്തിന്റെ പൂഴുക്കൾ ചെടികളുടെ വേരുകൾ തിന്നു നശിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനാൽ ചെടികൾ വാടി ഉണങ്ങി പോകുന്നതാണ് ആക്രമണലക്ഷണം. പഞ്ചാബിലും ഗുജറാത്തിലും ഇത് കരിമ്പിന്റെ ഒരു ശത്രുവായി കണക്കാക്കിയിട്ടുണ്ട്.

K. V. MAMMEN

College of Horticulture.
Division of Entomology

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Fig. 1 *Schizonycha ruficollis*F. on sugarcane

