

# SOIL SAMPLES FOR EELWORM ASSESSMENT

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From 1960 until 1965 all routine estate soil samples were processed by 3 mercantile establishments in Colombo to determine the number of plant parasitic eelworms present. In January and March 1965, at the instigation of Mr W. T. Williams, detailed comparisons were made between eelworm counts obtained by the Colombo Commercial Company (CCC) in Colombo and by the Tea Research Institute (TRI) at St Coombs. From duplicate soil samples from Ledgerwatte Estate, Badulla, the average number of root lesion eelworms, *Pratylenchus loosi*, extracted at St Coombs was 129 compared with an average of 18 from the samples processed in Colombo—approximately a seven-fold difference. Further tests were carried out at Ledgerwatte, St Coombs and Colombo with CCC and TRI staff carrying out independent extractions on duplicate soil samples at each location. In every case there was no significant difference in the CCC and TRI results obtained at any one site, but if the ambient temperature during the extraction period was higher than 80°F, the number of *P. loosi* extracted was always low. This was confirmed by experiments at St Coombs using incubators to obtain a range of temperature.

As Colombo temperatures are frequently higher than 80°F, we must conclude that only a small percentage of eelworms will be extracted from soil samples processed there. A laboratory has, therefore, been set up at St Coombs to process routine soil samples from tea estates.

## Instructions to Superintendents of Estates

Detailed instructions have already been given for collecting soil samples from tea estates (Hutchinson & Foster-Barham 1963). In future these samples should be sent to the Director, Tea Research Institute of Ceylon, St Coombs, Talawakele and clearly labelled '*Soil samples for eelworm counts*'. **At present only 10 samples can be accepted from any one estate.**

## Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Messrs. G. Phimister and T. P. G. Atukorale of the Colombo Commercial Company Ltd., for their co-operation in this work and for permission to use their results. We should also like to thank Mr L. M. de W. Tillekeratne and the Superintendent of Ledgerwatte for providing the duplicate soil samples from that estate.

## Reference

HUTCHINSON, M. T. & FOSTER-BARHAM, C. B. (1963). Soil samples from tea estates for estimation of meadow nematodes. *Tea Quart.* **34** : 34-37.