

Research Note

A Beneficial Mite on Coconut

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A mite, infesting coconut palms in an estate in the North Western Province of Sri Lanka, and indentified by the British Museum as *Neocypholaelaps ampullula*, (Berlese) *Acarina: Ameroseiidae* is reported. The mite is described by Evans (1963) but its biology and the nature of its association with the coconut palm are not adequately recorded. *N. ampullula* has been recorded on the coconut inflorescence in Indonesia and is considered a good pollinating agent.

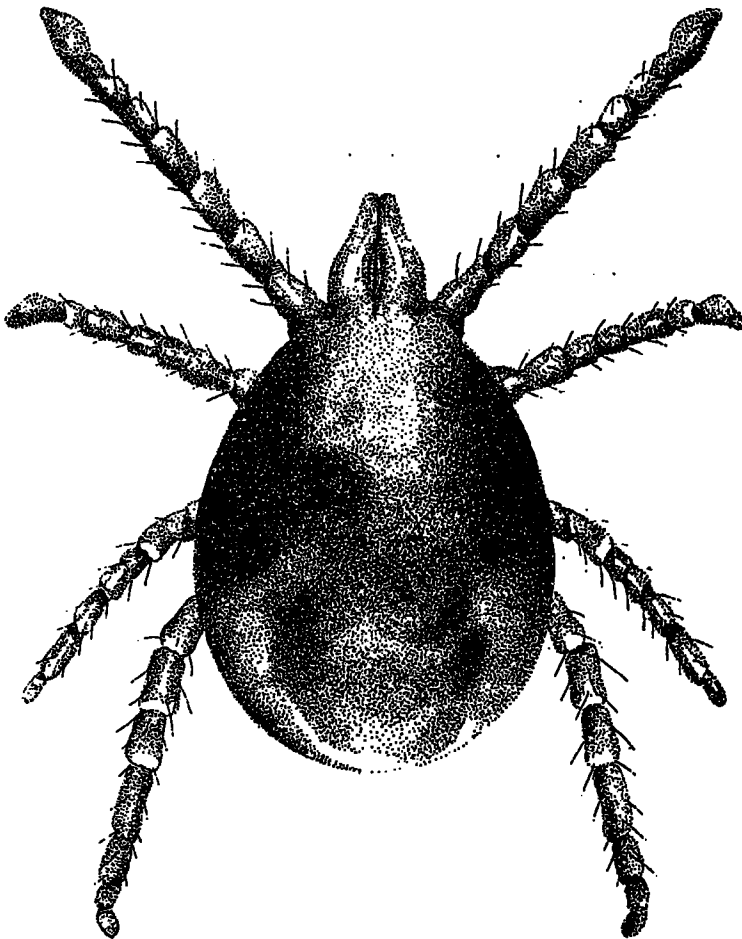


Fig. 1. *Neocypholaelaps ampullula* mite

A phoretic association with the bee *Apis indica* has been described (Situmorang, 1975). Grobov (1974) recorded *N. ampullula* as a parasite of the bee *Apis cerana indica*.

In Sri Lanka *N. ampullula* (Fig.1) was found to be present in very large numbers on the newly opened inflorescence and the surrounding spathes, bracts, and the leaf bases. The majority of the mites were observed to gather on the distal ends of the spikelets of the inflorescence and were observed to move briskly amongst the freshly opened male flowers. The evidence of their aggregation near the male flowers would perhaps indicate that they could be feeding on pollen. The mites had pollen grains adhering to their bodies, and appear to act as pollinating agents, as mites were also observed on the female flowers.

This is the first record of *N. ampullula* in Sri Lanka. Studies on the biology and habits of this mite species are now being conducted in order to understand the exact nature of their activities on the coconut palm, and to quantify their effect, if any, on the pollination of the coconut palm.

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