

## PREVENTIVE MEASURES IN THE CONTROL OF THE RED WEEVIL PEST

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The Red Weevil, *Rhynchophorus ferrugineus* F., is the most serious pest of young coconut palms in Ceylon and is distributed in all coconut growing areas in the island.

With the emphasis on replanting, its effective control is vital. As the grub begins its life within the palm, it is difficult to detect the pest in the early stages of infestation; and in most cases detection is possible only after the palm has been severely attacked. Thus timely application of remedial measures becomes difficult.

It is seen then, that the best method of control is to prevent the Red Weevil from attacking young palms, that is, by taking proper preventive measures. It is stressed that the preventive measures stipulated below should form an integral part of the routine agricultural practices on all young coconut plantations.

### Preventive Measures

(a) The trees should be kept healthy without wounds or cracks, as the pest lays its eggs in the wounds and cracks that appear on the stem, base of petiole and elsewhere.

(b) In each estate, a regular survey of young palms up to 10 to 12 years of age should be carried out by trained labourers to detect the presence of the grubs of the Red Weevil. The following signs are indicative of the presence of the pest:

- (1) the withered bud.
- (2) the small holes in the stem from which the chewed up fibres are thrown out. This may be accompanied by the oozing out of a brownish viscous liquid.
- (3) As the grubs feed they produce a crunching noise, which could be heard if the ear is placed near the trunk of the palm.
- (4) The splitting of the petioles near the area of attack.

The labourers should also inspect the palms for wounds. The infested portions should be carefully excavated, the grubs scooped out and the entire surface of the wound dressed up with tar.

This routine operation may be difficult in small holdings due to lack of labour. It should be noted, however, that this is the best method of detecting the pest and should be carried out at least once a month.

(c) All wounds should be smeared periodically with tar, as one application appears to be insufficient.

(d) It has been observed that Stem Bleeding in young palms may be followed by Red Weevil attack. It is necessary to treat all wounds caused by Stem Bleeding with tar, after the removal of decayed portions.

(e) Severely affected palms which do not recover after chemical treatment should be cut and burnt.

Effective control of the Red Weevil is necessary on all young coconut plantations, as the pest causes considerable damage to palms.\*

\*Readers who are interested to know further details of the life history of this ubiquitous pest of the coconut palm are recommended to read the article "The Red Palm Weevil (*Rhynchophorus Ferrungineus*) in Ceylon" by Hilary F. Goonawardene appearing in Ceylon Coconut Quarterly—Volume IX, Nos. 1/2 (pp. 20-40). The Article on "Red Weevil and its Control" by J.K.F. Kirthisinghe appearing in Ceylon Coconut Planters' Review—Volume I, No. 2 (pp. 11-25) and C.R.I. Leaflet No. 37 "Red Weevil and its Control" revised edition issued in April, 1963 may be read with profit.

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