

### Short Communication

## INCIDENCE OF NEMATODE DAMAGE IN THE MID-COUNTRY CAUSED BY THE BURROWING NEMATODE, *RADOPHOLUS SIMILIS*

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The burrowing nematode, *Radopholus similis* (Thorne, 1949), initially called as *Tylenchus similis* (Cobb, 1915) is widely distributed in tropical and sub-tropical countries and is found to attack a very wide range of hosts. In Sri Lanka, the presence of this nematode was first recorded in 1968 in tea plantations in the elevation range of 500 - 1000m (Sivapalan, 1968).

Both males and females of this nematode are vermiform and are found to be semi-endoparasitic on the roots of their hosts. The damage caused by this nematode to roots of plants are very similar to that caused by *Pratylenchus* sp. On invading the roots, these nematodes enter the cortical region and feed and destroy the cells resulting in necrotic areas or lesions and cavities.

The tea plants attacked by this nematode are generally stunted and show premature flowering and fruiting that is characteristic of nematode damage (Sivapalan, 1968).

Observations made so far indicate the tea clone TRI 2025 is particularly susceptible and as such planting of this clone in the elevation range of 500 - 1000m should be done with caution. On the other hand, field observations made so far indicate that the clone CH 13 is resistant. This clone has also been found to be resistant to drought as well.

Since this nematode is readily spread to areas hitherto uninfested through infested nursery plants, it is most important to ensure the use of plants free of this nematode. The source of nursery soil should be carefully checked for possible infestation and if in doubt one should ensure that such soils are fumigated as is done in the control of the root-lesion nematodes at higher altitudes.

Contaminated water is another important source of infestation of nursery plants. It is essential to avoid using water supplies from ravines that are likely to pass through infested fields. Vegetation such as banana clumps, pepper, Guinea grass and ornamentals like anthuriums harbour these nematodes. As a safety precaution it will be useful to use water from springs or special wells.

### REFERENCES

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- THORNE, G. (1949). On the classification of the Tylenchida, new order (Nematoda: Phasmida). *Proc. Helminth. Soc. Wash.* 16: 37-73.