



Coconut Research Institute of Sri Lanka



Advisory Circular No B 15

PLESISPA BEETLE

The plesispa beetle scientifically known as *Plesispa reichei* was first reported in Sri Lanka in 1997 from Badalgama (Gampaha District). It is now wide spread throughout the coconut triangle.

Nature and identification of damage

The pest causes damage to seedlings and young palms (Picture 1). And it does not infest adult palms. The damage causes drying of leaves resulting set back of growth. If the infestation is severe, occasional death of seedlings could occur.

Both adults and larvae of the pest, live in between the folded blades of leaflets, and in unopened young fronds in the bud. The damage is caused by larvae and adults feeding on tissues of the young unopened leaflets which become visible when the leaf unfolds (Picture 2). The symptoms of



Picture 1: A damaged seedling



Picture 2: A leaf of a damaged seedling

the damage causes by the adult is different to that of larvae. The damage by adults appear as brown colour streaks of 0.5 - 1.0 cm long while that of larvae produce brown patches of varying sizes (Picture 3). Numerous patches coalesce to form large dried up patches on leaves.

Due to the death and shriveling of the damaged tissues the unfolded leaflets are highly vulnerable to wind damage.

Description and life cycle of the pest

Adult is about 6.5 - 7.5mm long and looks similar to a firefly (Picture 4). Female is slightly longer than the male. Head and thorax are brownish orange in colour, while elytra (wings)

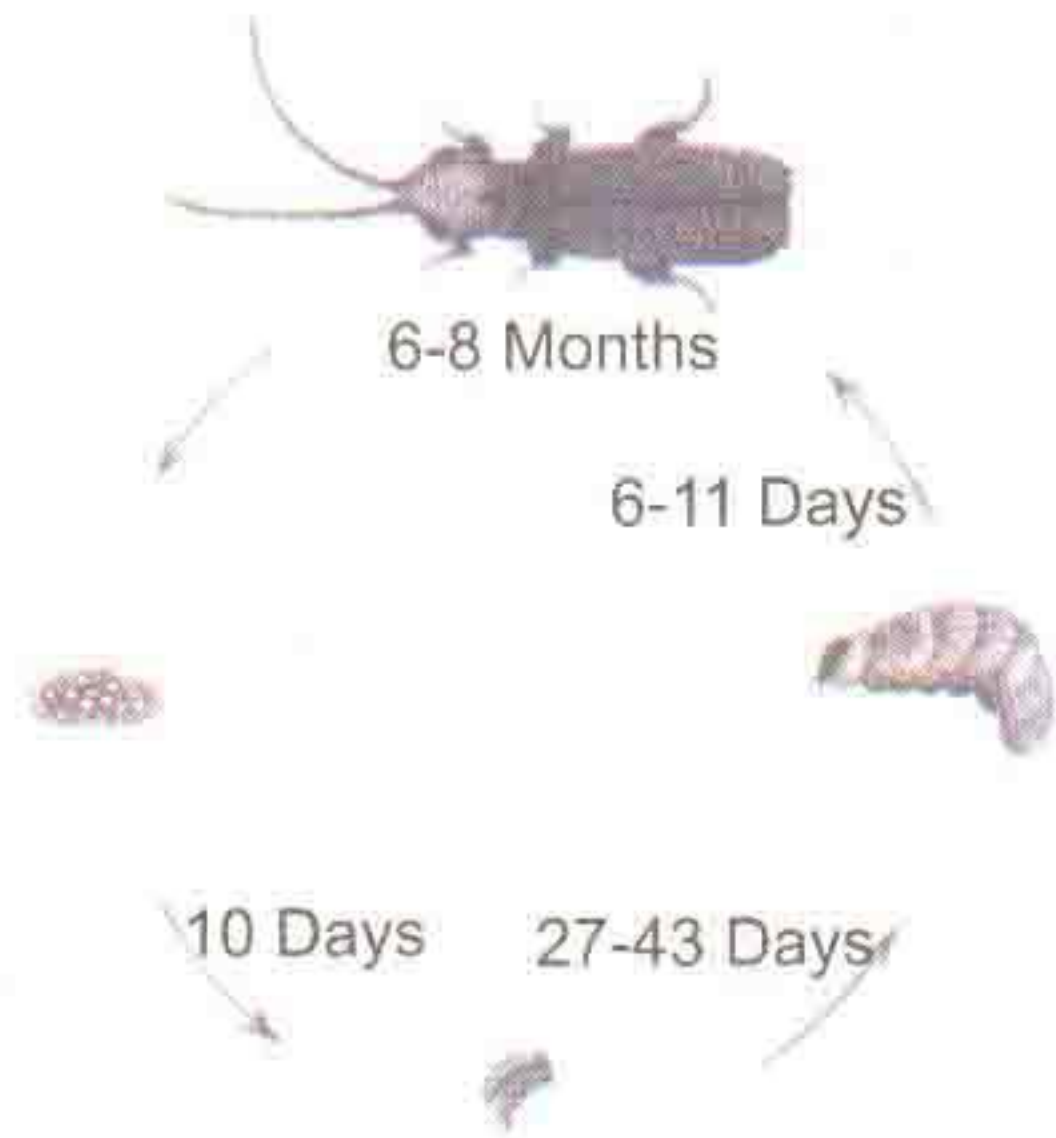


Picture 3: Beetle living on a leaf and its damage

are black. A female lays 50-100 eggs during the life period. Larva and pupa are creamy white in colour, and flat. The larvae possess pair of calliper like processes at the posterior end of the body. All stages of the pest in present on this unopened leaflet (Picture 5). Their presence could be noticed by carefully unfolding and checking the bud leaves of the palm.



Picture 4: A close view of adult beetle.



Picture 5: Life cycle of Plesispa beetle

If the damage and the live stages of the pest are observed, spray one of the following insecticides at the given dosage.

Carbosulfan	20 SC 3 ml/ liter of water
Chlorpyrifos	40 EC 3 ml/ liter of water

It is essential to wet the bud region thoroughly while spraying, to allow contact of the insecticide with the pest. If there is a reinfestation repeat the spraying at an interval of 3 weeks as per the recommendation.

Note: All insecticide are toxic and should handle with care.