Kenya Forestry Research Institute

PEST UPDATE

Thaumastocoris peregrinus

A pest of ***Eucalyptus species*** in Kenya

September 2011

Taxonomy

Thaumastocoris peregrinus is an insect commonly known as the Bronze bug. It belongs to the order Hemiptera (true bugs), superfamily Cimicoidea and family Thaumastocoridae.

Adult bronze bugs on a Eucalyptus leaf

Biology

The bug is a small (2-4mm) sap-sucking insect. The adults and nymphs occur on the same leaf in aggregations. The colour of the adult body is light brown with dark brown spots. Eggs are laid in black capsules on leaves either singularly or together and usually in a mark on the leaf. The bug has a life cycle of 35 days leading to several generations in a year. Each female produce about 60 eggs.

Invasion

The insect is a pest attacking Eucalyptus species. It originated from Australia and has been reported attacking Eucalyptus in South Africa, Argentina, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Ethiopia. The pest was first reported in Kenya in January 2010 and has since spread to most areas where Eucalyptus is grown in the country.

Damage and Symptoms of Attack

The sucking of sap by the bug causes the tree leaves to turn brown. The canopy colour changes from green to reddish-yellow or yellow-brown as the infestation progresses. During heavy infestation, affected trees lose their leaves, branch tips may die and eventually lead to death of the tree. The adults and nymphs are found in both sides of the leaf and feed in aggregation. High pest numbers and symptoms of damage are commonly observed during the dry seasons. The pest number decreases with increase in rainfall leading to host plant recovery.

Attacked Eucalyptus trees

Attacked Eucalyptus leaf with brown spots and black egg masses

Host Range

Several Eucalyptus species and hybrids.

Management

Currently the pest can be managed by use of systemic insecticides, eg. Imidachloprid, which is absorbed through the roots. Its important to determine the concentration of active roots of trees where the chemicals can be applied for effective uptake. Other methods of managing this pest are being investigated.

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