

**SOME ASPECTS OF THE BIOLOGY AND ECOLOGY OF THE RICE FIELD
MOLE RAT, *BANDICOTA BENGALENSIS*, IN SRI LANKA**

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Field investigations on the biology and ecology of the rice field mole rat *Bandicota bengalensis* Gray (Rodentia : Muridae), was carried out for two cultivation seasons. These rats colonised the rice field bunds by making extensive burrows within. Observations were made on the rat population by regular fumigation of their burrows using phosphine gas followed by the examination of the killed animals.

The results clearly indicated a very close synchrony between the development of the rat colony and the stages of the rice crop. Primordia initiation stage of the rice crop appeared to stimulate the reproductive physiology of the female rats that led to an increase in the numbers of gravid females. This was followed by increased nesting, littering and juvenile production. Thus it was possible to re-classify the stages of the rice crop in terms of the reproductive status of the female rodent population. However, numbers of adult male rats fluctuated very widely and showed no definite relationship with the stage of the rice crop.

These observations were useful in designing a practical control strategy against this pest.