

NEW RECORD OF HETEROPSYLLA CUBANA (PSYLLIDAE),
A SERIOUS PEST OF LEUCAENA LEUCOCEPHALA, ITS
DISTRIBUTION AND DAMAGE CAUSED IN
COCONUT GROWING AREAS OF SRI LANKA.

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The importance of Leucaena leucocephala as a multipurpose tree in coconut growing areas is well known. An outbreak of Heteropsylla cubana (Psyllidae) in September 1987, was observed to have caused severe damage to L. leucocephala in many parts of coconut growing areas.

The heaviest infestation was observed on new tender shoots which developed after pruning, during dry weather. Die back of the branches was distinctly seen. A sticky substance exuded from the damaged shoots. Further, the honey dew secreted by the pest covered the foliage and tender stems on which sooty mould developed subsequently. In order trees severe defoliation was observed.

The extent of damage to L. leucocephala variety K 636, planted among coconut was studied. The average fresh foliage and wood yields during the dry weather before the pest infestation were 2.89 kg and 4.85 kg per tree respectively, while those after the pest attack were 1.08 kg foliage and 5.54 kg wood per tree.

Pest infestation was reduced to unnoticeable level after the onset of the south west monsoon rains and the affected trees recovered and yielded on average, 4.77 kg foliage and 5.72 kg wood per tree.

The natural enemies associated with the pest were Oecophylla smaragdina (Fabricius) (Formicidae) Menochilus sexmaculatus (Fabricius) and Coccinella transversalis Fabricius (Coccinellidae). However these were apparently ineffective in the control of this pest.