EVALUATION OF POLYTHENE COVERS AS A MEANS OF PROTECTING SNAKE-GOURDS FROM MELON FRUIT FLY ATTACK

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Snake gourd is subject to attack by a number of insect pests among which the melon fruit fly Dacus cucurbitae (Diptera-Trypetidae) is one of the most serious causing much economic loss to growers. The female fruit fly lays eggs in young fruits and the maggots that hatch out feed on the fruits causing them to rot.

This study was carried out at the University of Kelaniya on the "Tinnevelly" (short) variety of snake-gourd. It was observed that young fruits less than 10cm long were rarely attacked by the fruit fly possibly due to its strong characteristic odour and its hirsute nature both of which diminish as the fruits grow longer. By covering them with polythene bags made from 75cm lengths of 12cm wide polythene tubing when the fruits were 7.5 - 10 cm long, it was possible to protect them from fruit flies with no adverse side effects. Protection of the fruits with polythene could be achieved at one-fourth the cost of a recommended insecticidal treatment for fruit flies with none of the disadvantages of chemical control.

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