

## B-91 : OBSERVATIONS ON THE FRECKLE DISEASE OF BANANA

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The freckle disease of banana occurs in Sri Lanka, however, no records are available locally. The disease is characterized by minute, pinhead sized spots or freckles in the skin of the fruit and the leaf and is mainly represented by subepidermal spore bearing structures. The diseased regions have a rough texture and the freckles do not advance into lesions during fruit ripening. The disease was found in almost every local variety observed. Two closely related fungi, *Macrophoma musae* (perfect stage *Guignardia musae*) and *Phyllosticta musarum* were identified, the latter being more common. The two fungi are not found together and in certain varieties only one species was found consistently suggesting a varietal specialization. Both species produce pycnidia and perithecia in the infected tissue.

Leaf infections occur in mature or senescing stages as scattered or aggregated spots and at advanced stages the spots merge and appear as an irregular, large, black stain. These apparently serve as sources of inocula to fruit infections. Conidia are dispersed with rain splash and infections are often heavier on one half of the fruit, probably the rain-exposed side.

Freckle disease is not destructive but heavy infections lower the appearance and the market quality of the fruit creating problems especially to the exporter.

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