

B-27 *Diconocoris distanti* (Drake): a new pest of black pepper (*Piper nigrum* L) in Sri Lanka

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Black pepper, *Piper nigrum* (L), is one of the important export agricultural crops earning about Rs. 350 million annually. A new insect pest of pepper was discovered in the Kandy district for the first time. It damages the leaves and tender spikes by sucking the sap. The sucking points show dark brown patches, and sometimes spikes fall off and fruit setting becomes poor. The pest was identified as *Diconocoris distanti* (Drake) (Heteroptera, Tingidae) with the help of the International Institute of Entomology, U.K.

A series of experiments were carried out at the Research Station, Matale, to study the biology, seasonal distribution and the economic importance of the pest.

Eggs were found inserted into the leaf tissues near the mid rib. The incubation period was 3-4 days. 5 nymphal stages were observed and the nymphal period was 19 - 20 days. The adults are black in colour with lace-like venation pattern. The life span of the adult was 9 -21 days.

100 pepper vines were sampled to study the distribution pattern of the pest. Number of adults observed in the field was low in the dry season (18 nos. in March and 8 nos. in April) than in the rainy season (54 nos. in August and 44 nos. in November). No significant differences were found in the yield and in number of fallen spikes in variety Panniyur-I. The damaged vines of variety Kuching showed significantly (1%) low yield (2299 g/vine) than the undamaged vines (5471 g/vine) and the number of fallen spikes was also significantly high (8.38/week/vine) in damaged vines than in undamaged vines (3.83/week/vine). Pepper lace bug is a potential pest for black pepper in Sri Lanka that may lead to economic loss of the crop.