B-89: Weed flora in a pineapple field and its relation to ant/ pineapple mealybug numbers

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The pink pineapple mealybug, *Dysmicoccus brevipes* Cockerell, causes the wilt disease on pineapple. Ants which attend on the mealybugs are reported to enter the field from weedy edges.

Objective of this experiment was to study the categories of weeds in the pineapple field and investigate the relationship between weed density and ant/mealybug numbers to help recommend appropriate management methods against the wilt disease.

A replicated, experiment of pineapple, in a randomized complete block design was established in the field at Makandura. Treatments were (a) pineapple plants were infested with mealybugs and (b) plants were not infested. Sub-plot treatments were: T1- clean-weeded and T2 - unweeded between pineapple rows.

Ant numbers were higher in the unweeded T2 than in the clean weeded T1 plots. Graphical analysis of data showed a positive relationship between total weed density and mealybug numbers in the infested plots of the experiment. This relationship was low in the uninfested plots of the experiment although mealybug numbers built-up in these plots as well.

It could be concluded that low weed density favours low ant/ mealybug numbers in pineapple fields. It is therefore important to recommend clean weeding between pineapple rows.