

Mealybug

Pink sugarcane mealybug

Saccharicoccus sacchari

Distribution

Pink sugarcane mealybugs occur in all cane areas.

Damage

Mealybugs usually do not damage cane, but very high numbers will weaken it. Sooty mould also grows on honey-dew produced by the insects.

Mealybugs may contribute to sugar quality problems.

Description

The adult pink sugarcane mealybug is a soft, oval, wrinkled, wingless insect up to 5 mm in length, covered with white powder (Photos). Nymphs are similar but smaller. Colonies are usually found on stalks behind leaf sheaths, but can also occur on the underground stems.

Biology

Mealybugs survive harvests on underground parts of the plant. Crawlers reappear above ground in spring after ratoons are away. As new nodes are formed, colonies start behind the leaf sheaths. Numbers are highest in February - March and then drop because of lower temperatures and parasite and predator activity. Growth from eggs to adults takes about 4 weeks.



Photos: Mealy bugs.

Movement between fields may be on planting material, wind or by ants.

Management

Control is not required. Tigher-trashing varieties are more prone to attack.

A parasitic wasp, a fungus and a fly help to control numbers, particularly in late summer.