

Scale insect

Sugarcane scale

Aulacaspis madiunensis

Distribution

Sugarcane scale is important as a pest only in southern Queensland and northern New South Wales. It is also found in central and northern Queensland.

Damage

Scale insects suck the juice of the cane through the rind of the stalk. This weakens cane, lowers sugar content, and with heavy infestation the stalk shrinks and dries up. Heavily infested stalks may be almost completely covered in a coating of scale (Photo 1). The insect can cause much damage in drought-stressed standover cane, because of the long period available for population build-up.

Description

The adult insect is hidden below a flat, circular pale-green to grey scale about 3 mm in diameter. The scale is firmly pressed against the stalk. Newly hatched crawlers are as small as 0.2 mm and difficult to see.

Biology

Nymphs move by crawling or being carried by wind. Adult scales do not move.

Management

Scale-free planting material should be used to reduce the chance of spread to a clean field. Standover cane should be avoided. Some varieties may be affected more than others.



Photo 1: Adult scale insects on leaf sheaths.