

Aphids

Sugarcane aphid

Melanaphis sacchari

Corn aphid

Rhopalosiphum maidis

Oriental grassroot aphid

Tetraneura nigriabdominalis

Distribution

Aphids are found on sugarcane in all cane areas.

Damage

The sugarcane aphid feeds in colonies on the underside of leaves. Heavily infested leaves become spotted and dry up. Sooty mould also grows on the honeydew produced by the aphids (Photo 1). This species does not transmit viruses.

The corn aphid is not common in sugarcane, but is usually found in grasses like wild sorghums. This aphid spreads sugarcane mosaic virus (Photo 2).

The oriental grassroot aphid feeds on roots, sometimes producing a red-purple colour in the leaves.

Description

Sugarcane aphid is oval and light-coloured, ranging from yellow-white to green or brown-tinged. Two stalks jut out from the rear of the body.

Corn aphid is larger, longer, and darker, ranging from pale olive to yellow-green. The base of each tail stalk has an olive-brown blotch.

Oriental grassroot aphid is found only on roots and has small cone-like tail stalks.

Biology

Aphids may lay eggs or produce live nymphs. There are winged and wingless forms.

Many other aphid species can be found in sugarcane crops. Some of these can spread sugarcane mosaic virus, even though they feed on sugarcane for only short periods.

Management

Control of aphids is usually not needed. Parasites and predators, such as ladybirds and syrphid flies, usually control dense infestations.



Photo 1: Sugarcane aphids.



Photo 2: Corn aphids.