



**FIELD GUIDE**

# **DISEASES OF AUSTRALIAN SUGARCANE**

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**FIELD GUIDE**  
**DISEASES  
OF AUSTRALIAN  
SUGARCANE**

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**Sugar Research Australia Limited**

# Contents

Page No.

---

Introduction	05
Key	06
Photo index	07
Layout	16
Icons	17

---

<b>AUSTRALIAN LEAF DISEASES</b>	<b>19</b>
---------------------------------	-----------

---

Quick comparison	19
Brown rust	21
Brown stripe	22
Eye spot	23
Orange rust	24
Red leaf spot	25
Ring spot	26
Yellow spot	27

---

<b>EXOTIC LEAF DISEASES</b>	<b>28</b>
-----------------------------	-----------

---

Quick comparison	28
Brown spot	30
Leaf scorch	31
Target blotch	32
Veneer blotch	33
White speck	34
Zonate leaf spot	35

# Contents

Page No.

---

<b>PLANTING-MATERIAL DISEASES</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Fusarium sett rot</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Pineapple sett rot</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>AUSTRALIAN WHOLE-PLANT DISEASES</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Quick comparison</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Bacterial mottle</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Chlorotic streak</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Fiji leaf gall</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Leaf scald</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Sugarcane mosaic (SCMV)</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Pokkah boeng</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Ratoon stunting (RSD)</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Red rot</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Red stripe/Top rot</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Sclerophthora</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Smut</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Striate mosaic (SCSMaV)</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>EXOTIC WHOLE-PLANT DISEASES</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Downy mildew</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Grassy shoot</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Green grassy shoot</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Gumming</b>	<b>55</b>

# Contents

Page No.

---

<b>Sugarcane streak mosaic (SCSMV)</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Ramu stunt</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>White leaf</b>	<b>58</b>
<hr/>	
<b>SOIL-BORNE DISEASES</b>	<b>59</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Basal stem rot (BSR)</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Nematodes</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Pachymetra root rot</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Pythium root rot</b>	<b>62</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Diagnosis</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>When diseases occur</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Leaf diseases</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Severity assessment</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Planting-material diseases</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Whole-plant diseases</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Queensland minor diseases</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Soil-borne diseases</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Quarantine – State</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>General</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Index</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Further information</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>Biosecurity zone map</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Metric conversion table</b>	<b>110</b>

# Introduction

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This guide has been designed for practical 'in-field' use.

Text is kept to a minimum and symbols are used to convey information.

General information is at the end of the guide.

**To use the guide, follow the procedure below:**

## **Understand the layout**

- The disease layout is illustrated on page 16

## **Symptoms**

- Determine the main symptom you have seen on page 6
- Matching page numbers will lead you to the disease

## **Confirmation**

- Specific comparison pages on where, when and how common the diseases are will help confirm your diagnosis

# Key

Main symptom	Page number
Crop is brown	21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35
Crop or stalks are dead	37, 43, 48, 51, 5
Reduced crop growth	
• Whole crop	46, 47, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 60, 61
• Patch	40, 41, 42, 43, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 61
Uneven plant growth	40, 41, 42, 43, 49, 51, 52, 53, 55, 57, 58, 60, 61
Twisted, deformed shoot	42, 45
Bent stalks	45
Dead spindle leaf	45, 48
Leaf spots	21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35
Leaf stripes	40, 41, 43, 48, 52, 55, 59
Leaf galls	42
Poor germination	36, 37
Poor root growth	59, 60, 61, 62
Side-shooting	43, 49

Similar symptoms may be caused by more than one disease or by other factors such as pests, nutrition, herbicides and physical damage.

# Photo index

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**Brown rust**

p 21



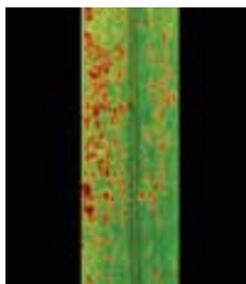
**Brown stripe**

p 22



**Eye spot**

p 23



**Orange rust**

p 24



# Photo index

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**Red leaf spot**

p 25



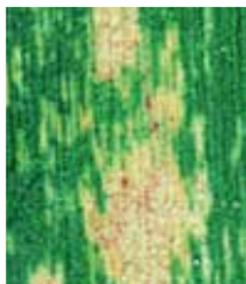
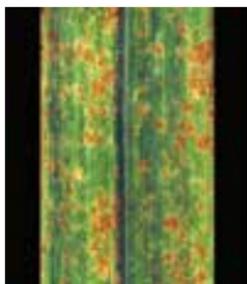
**Ring spot**

p 26



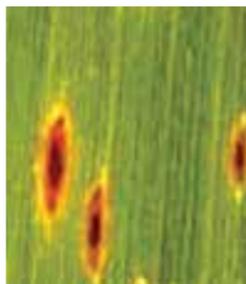
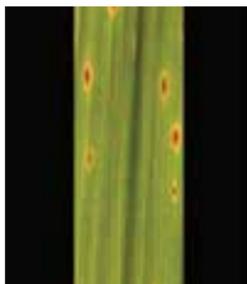
**Yellow spot**

p 27



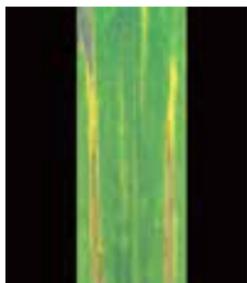
**Brown spot**

p 30



# Photo index

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**Leaf scorch**  
p 31



**Target blotch**  
p 32



**Veneer blotch**  
p 33



**White speck**  
p 34



# Photo index

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**Zonate leaf spot**

p 35



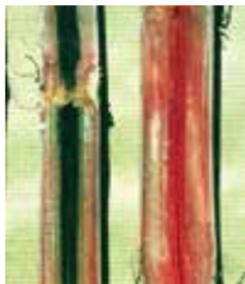
**Fusarium sett rot**

p 36



**Pineapple  
sett rot**

p 37



**Bacterial mottle**

p 40



# Photo index

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**Chlorotic streak**

p 41



**Fiji leaf gall**

p 42



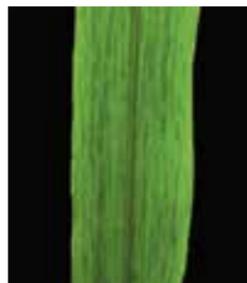
**Leaf scald**

p 43



**Sugarcane mosaic (SCMV)**

p 44



# Photo index

---



**Pokkah boeng**

p 45



**Ratoon stunting**

p 46



**Red rot**

p 47



**Red stripe/  
Top rot**

p 48



# Photo index

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**Sclerophthora**

p 49



**Smut**

p 50



**Striate mosaic**

p 51



**Downy mildew**

p 52



# Photo index

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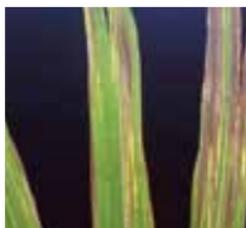
**Grassy shoot**

p 53



**Green grassy shoot**

p 54



**Gumming**

p 55



**Sugarcane streak mosaic (SCSMV)**

p 56



**Ramu stunt**

p 57



# Photo index

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**White leaf**

p 58



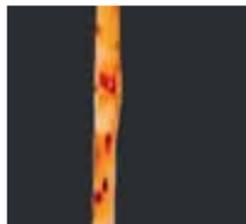
**Basal stem rot**

p 59



**Nematodes**

p 60



**Pachymetra  
root rot**

p 61

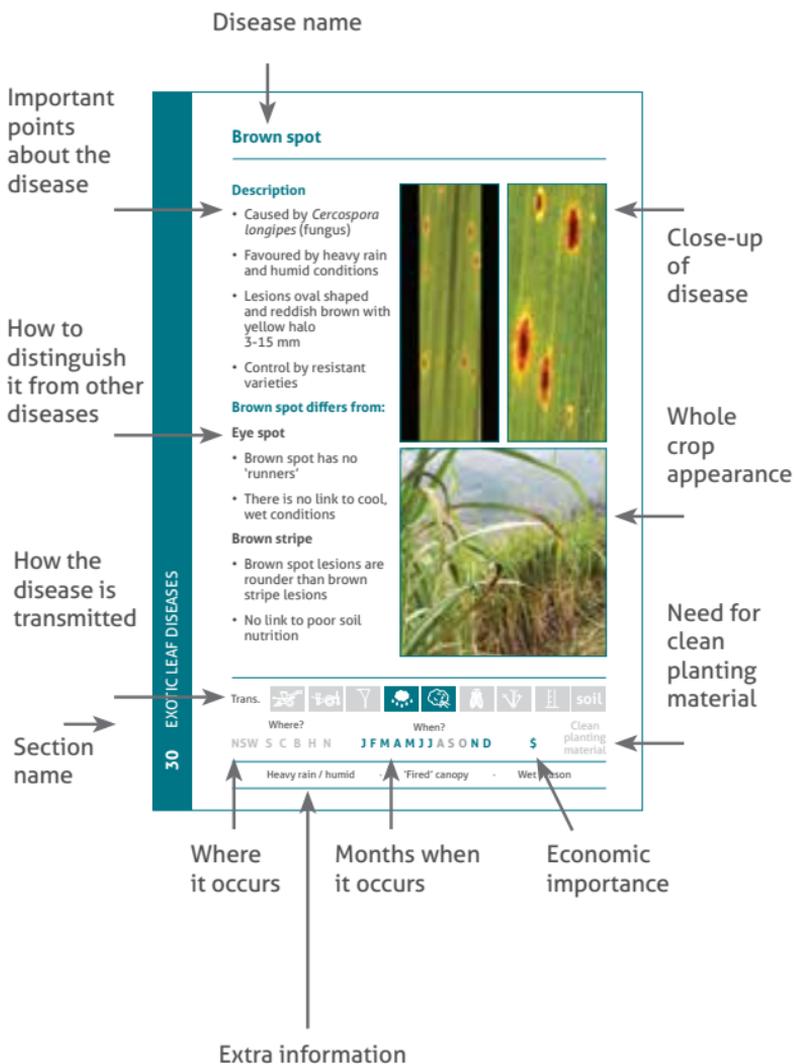


**Pythium root rot**

p 62



# Layout



# Icons

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Five types of icons are used:

- How the disease is transmitted
- Where it occurs
- When it occurs
- Economic importance
- Need for clean planting material

## Transmission icon



Harvesters



Planters



Cane knives & mechanical equipment used to cut cane



Wind-blown rain



Wind



Insects



Planting material



Drainage water

**soil**

Soil-borne



A coloured icon suggests disease transmission



A grey icon suggests no transmission

# Icons

## Distribution icon

Where the disease occurs (coloured font).

NSW	New South Wales	B	Burdekin region
S	Southern region	H	Herbert region
C	Central region	N	Northern region

Where?

Occurs here → **NSW S C** B H N ← not here

## Occurrence icon

Months when the disease occurs (coloured font).

Occurs in these months → **J F M A M J J A S O N D** ← not usually seen in these

## Economic value icon

This has three levels, based on:

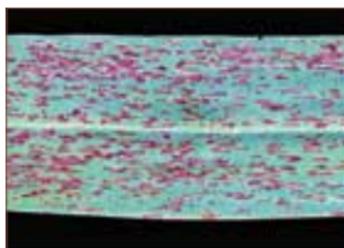
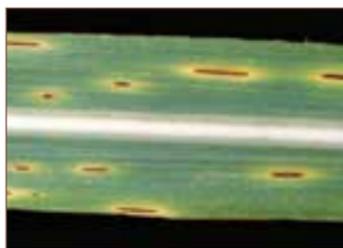
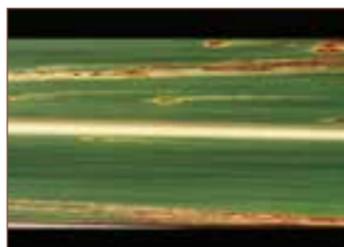
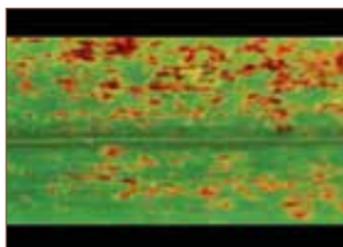
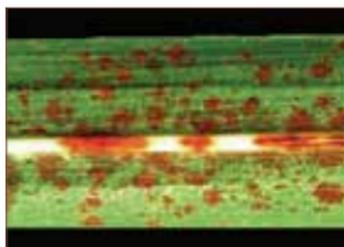
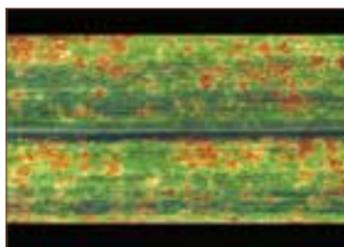
- The historical economic effect in Australia
- The potential effect (exotic disease)

\$\$\$	\$\$	\$
<b>Very significant</b>	<b>Significant</b>	<b>Insignificant</b>

## Planting material icon

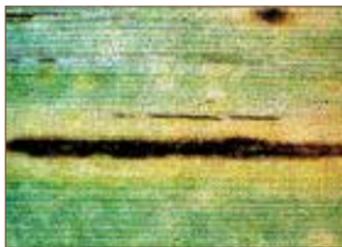
Coloured font means it is essential to use disease-free planting material.

**Clean Planting Material** → Disease-free planting material is essential for control

**Brown rust****Brown stripe****Eye spot****Orange rust****Red leaf spot****Ring spot****Yellow spot**



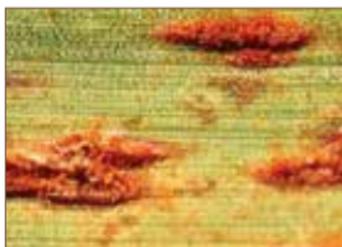
**Brown rust**



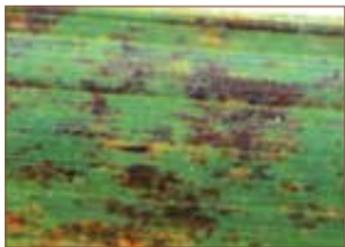
**Brown stripe**



**Eye spot**



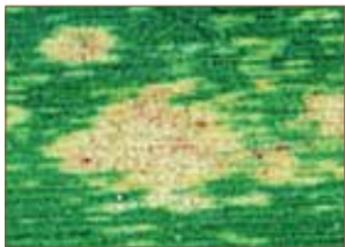
**Orange rust**



**Red leaf spot**



**Ring spot**



**Yellow spot**

## Brown rust

### Description

- Caused by *Puccinia melanocephala* (fungus)
- Favoured by cool nights (dew), warm sunny days
- Lesions elongated 5-10 mm x 1-2 mm
- Control by resistant varieties

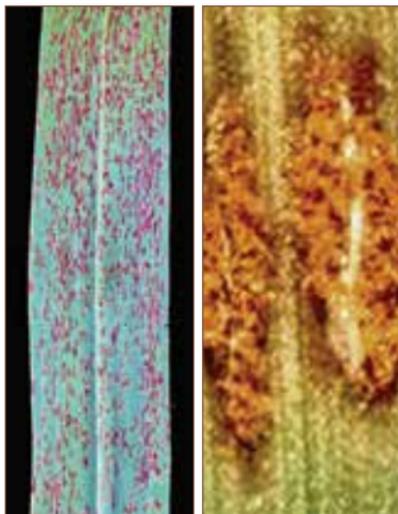
### Brown rust differs from:

#### Yellow spot

- Brown rust occurs in dry season, not wet
- Has elongated lesions (not round)
- Brown spores on underside of leaf

#### Orange rust

- Brown rust has brown, not orange spores
- Occurs in dry season, not wet
- Lesions longer than orange rust



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$\$\$

Clean  
planting  
material

Cool nights and sunny days

· Brown canopy

· Dry season

## Brown stripe

### Description

- Caused by *Bipolaris stenospila* (fungus)
- Favoured by poor nutrition
- Lesions elongated 5-7.5 mm x 2-4 mm
- Control by resistant varieties and better soil nutrition (P, K)

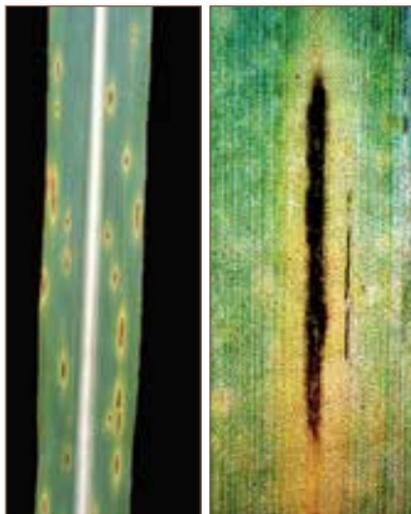
### Brown stripe differs from:

#### Eye spot

- Brown stripe is linked to soil nutrition
- Has no 'runner' associated with the stripe

#### Ring spot

- Brown stripe has a dark coloured centre to the lesion
- Has a halo around the edge of the lesion
- Lesions are elongated not round



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$

Clean planting material

Nutrient-deficient soils

· Brown canopy

· Mature cane

## Eye spot

### Description

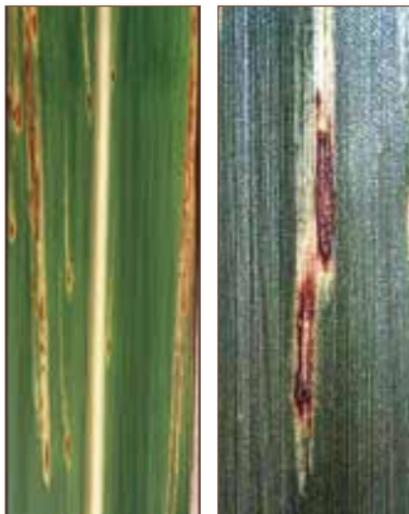
- Caused by *Bipolaris sacchari* (fungus)
- Favoured by cool, wet weather
- Lesions elongated 0.5-4 mm x 0.5-2 mm
- Dark centre with lighter halo
- Control by resistant varieties

### Eye spot differs from: Brown stripe

- Eye spot has a runner associated with the lesion
- Lesions more round than elongated

### Ring spot

- Eye spot lesions are smaller
- Has a runner associated with the lesion
- Eye spot has a coloured centre to the lesion
- Not as common as ring spot



Trans.									soil									
Where?				When?			Clean planting material											
NSW	S	C	B	H	N	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	\$\$
Cool, wet weather			Brown canopy			Winter												

## Orange rust

### Description

- Caused by *Puccinia kuehnii* (fungus)
- Favoured by warm, humid weather (summer or early autumn)
- Lesions elongated 3-8 mm x 1-2 mm
- Control by resistant varieties

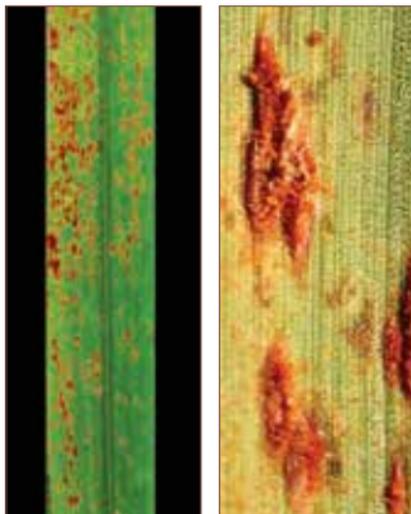
### Orange rust differs from:

#### Yellow spot

- Orange rust has elongated lesions (not round)
- Orange spores on underside of leaf

#### Brown rust

- Orange rust spores are orange, not brown
- Occurs in wet season, not dry
- Lesions shorter than brown rust



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$\$\$

Clean planting material

Warm, humid weather

· Brown canopy

· Wet season

## Red leaf spot

### Description

- Caused by *Dimeriella sacchari* (fungus)
- Favoured by warm, humid weather
- Lesions round, up to 12 mm
- Control by resistant varieties (not normally an issue)

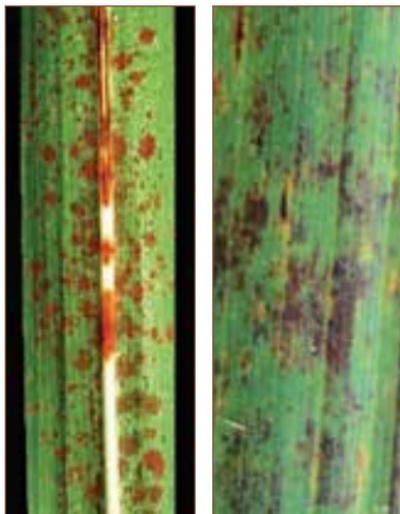
### Red leaf spot differs from:

#### Yellow spot

- Red leaf spot lesions seen only on upper side of leaf blade
- Lesions more red than yellow

#### Ring spot

- Red leaf spot lesions seen in upper section of canopy
- Lesions seen on upper leaf surface only
- Lesions lack dead tissue as seen with ring spot



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$

Clean  
planting  
material

Warm, humid weather

Red-brown canopy

Wet season

# Ring spot

## Description

- Caused by *Leptosphaeria sacchari* (fungus)
- Favoured by warm, humid weather
- Lesions oval elongated 1-5 mm x 4-18 mm
- Straw-coloured centre to lesions

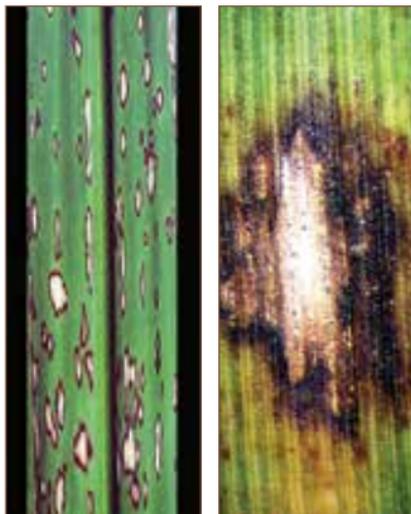
## Ring spot differs from:

### Eye spot

- Ring spot has no 'runner'
- Has larger lesions
- Occurs lower in crop canopy

### Yellow spot

- Ring spot occurs lower in canopy
- Has dead tissue in the central part of lesion
- Has minimal effect on crop yield
- No specific controls required



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$

Clean planting material

Warm, moist conditions

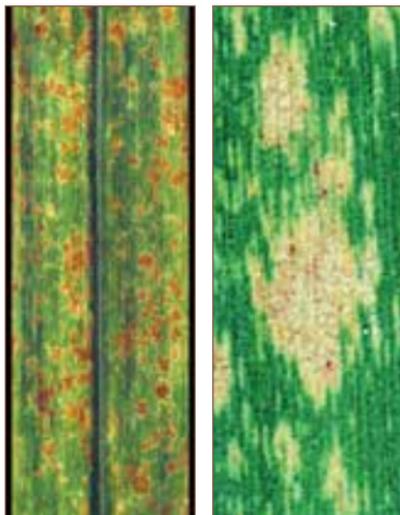
• Dead lower leaves

• End of wet season

# Yellow spot

## Description

- Caused by *Mycovellosiella koepkei* (fungus)
- Favoured by warm, humid weather
- Lesions irregular (roundish) up to 10 mm in diameter
- Lesions initially yellow but turn brick red
- Control by resistant varieties



## Yellow spot differs from:

### Red leaf spot

- Yellow spot lesions seen on both sides of the leaf
- Lesions yellow or brick red, not red



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

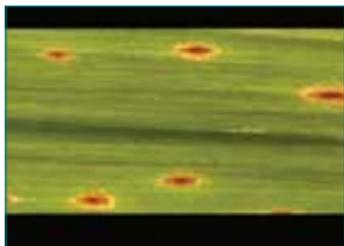
\$\$\$

Clean planting material

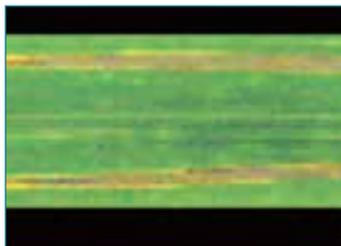
Wet, humid weather

· Brown canopy

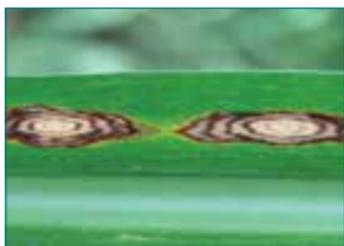
· Wet season



**Brown spot**



**Leaf scorch**



**Target blotch**



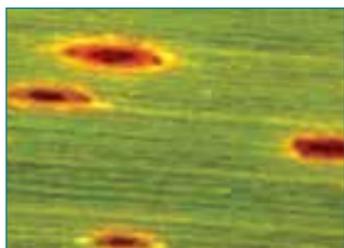
**Veneer blotch**



**White speck**



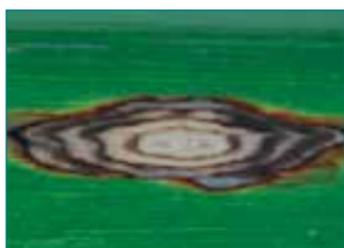
**Zonate leaf spot**



**Brown spot**



**Leaf scorch**



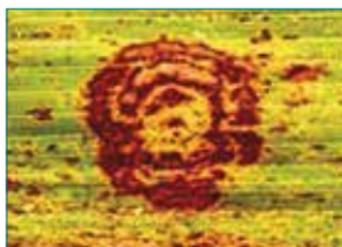
**Target blotch**



**Veneer blotch**



**White speck**



**Zonate leaf spot**

## Brown spot

### Description

- Caused by *Cercospora longipes* (fungus)
- Favoured by heavy rain and humid conditions
- Lesions oval shaped and reddish brown with yellow halo 3-15 mm
- Control by resistant varieties

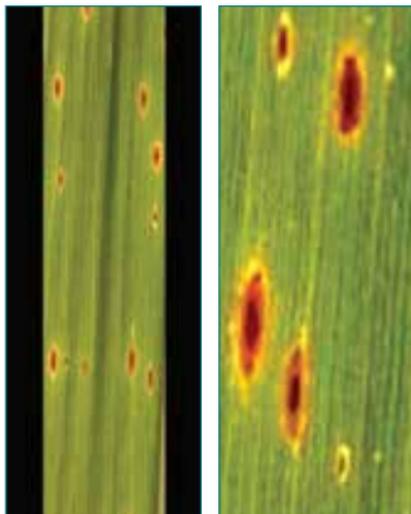
### Brown spot differs from:

#### Eye spot

- Brown spot has no 'runners'
- There is no link to cool, wet conditions

#### Brown stripe

- Brown spot lesions are rounder than brown stripe lesions
- No link to poor soil nutrition



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$

Clean  
planting  
material

Heavy rain / humid

• 'Fired' canopy

• Wet season

## Leaf scorch

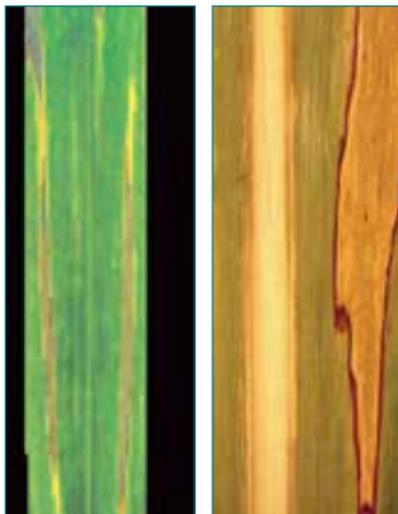
### Description

- Caused by *Stagonospora sacchari* (fungus)
- Favoured by rain and warm conditions
- Lesions spindle-shaped with dead tissue in centre, 50-200 mm x 5-10 mm
- Control by resistant varieties

### Leaf scorch differs from:

#### Other diseases

- Leaf scorch has characteristic spindle-shaped lesions
- Ramu scorch looks very similar, but caused by an insect
- Pathogen spores are found within the lesion with leaf scorch, but not Ramu scorch



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$\$\$

Clean  
planting  
material

Warm, rainy weather

• 'Fired' canopy

• Wet season/early dry

## Target blotch

### Description

- Caused by *Helminthosporium* sp. (fungus)
- Occurs principally on mature cane in winter
- Lesions straw-coloured to brown, necrotic areas with concentric rings (some similarity to ring spot)



### Target blotch differs from:

#### Ring spot

- Target blotch lesions are similar, except target blotch has concentric margins to the lesions



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$

Clean  
planting  
material

Wet conditions

· Dead lower leaves

· Winter

# Veneer blotch

## Description

- Caused by *Deightoniella papuana* (fungus)
- Lesions straw-coloured with a pattern like wood veneer
- Lesions up to 10-15 mm wide x 600 mm long



## Veneer blotch differs from:

### Ring spot

- Veneer blotch differs by having much larger, more elongated 'winged' lesions

### Target blotch

- Veneer blotch lesions are much larger and more elongated
- Veneer blotch has 'winged' lesions



Trans.									soil	
Where?	NSW S C B H N			J F M A M J J A S O N D					\$	Clean planting material
	Humid weather			•	Winged lesions			•	Wet season	

# White speck

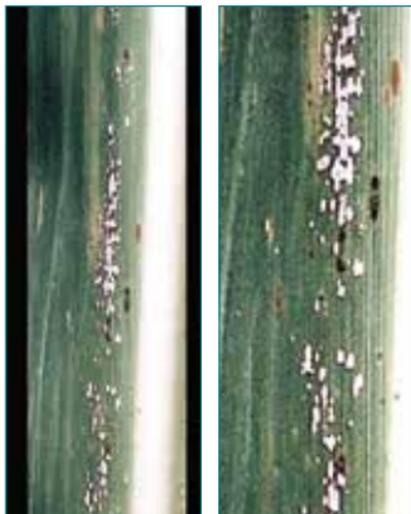
## Description

- Caused by *Elsinoe sacchari* (fungus)
- Little is known of favourable conditions
- Lesions are whitish-grey, sometimes with a red margin, 1-4 mm x 0.4-1 mm

## White speck differs from:

### Other leaf diseases

- White speck lesions are small and whitish-grey, and not readily confused with other leaf diseases



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$

Clean planting material

Little known information

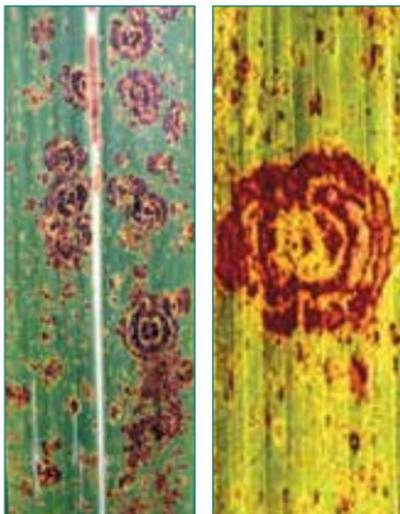
White speckled leaves

Older cane

## Zonate leaf spot

### Description

- Caused by *Gloeocercospora sorghi* (fungus)
- Favoured by hot, humid weather
- Lesions are a series of concentric rings of alternating dark and light brown tissue, up to 60 mm in diameter



### Zonate leaf spot differs from:

#### Yellow spot

- Zonate leaf spot has less affected tissue within the lesion and more reddening
- Lesions have a concentric pattern with zonate leaf spot



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$

Clean planting material

Hot, humid weather

• Red leaf lesions

• Wet season

## Fusarium sett rot

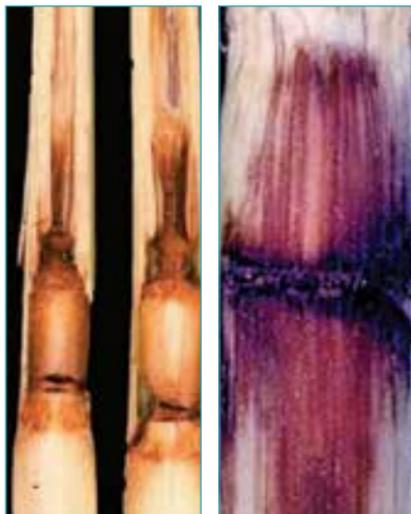
### Description

- Caused by *Fusarium sacchari* (fungus)
- Favoured by damaged planting material or abiotic stresses like waterlogging, cold, or drought conditions
- No chemicals registered for control
- Activity of chemicals unknown

### Fusarium sett rot differs from:

#### Pineapple sett rot

- Fusarium sett rot lacks the blackening of the central internal sett tissues and the fruity pineapple smell of freshly split setts
- Fusarium sett rot has a more purple colouration



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$

Clean  
planting  
material

Cold, dry or wet soils

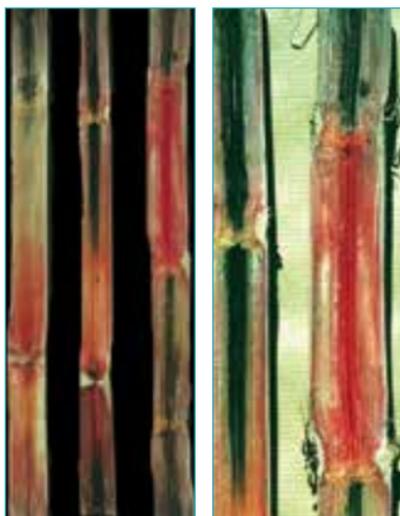
• Purple sett tissue

• Young plant cane

# Pineapple sett rot

## Description

- Caused by *Ceratocystis paradoxa* (fungus)
- Favoured by damaged planting material or cold, dry or wet soil conditions
- Reddening of internal sett tissues, black in the centre (spores)
- Fungicide control



## Pineapple sett rot differs from:

### Fusarium sett rot

- Pineapple has a central blackening of internal sett tissues (spores)
- PSR also has a pineapple smell in freshly split affected setts



### Other sett rots

- Lack the red/black symptoms

Trans.									soil
Where?	NSW S C B H N			J F M A M J J A S O N D			\$\$\$	Clean planting material	

Cold, dry or wet soils · Red/black sett tissue · Young planting cane



**Leaf scald**



**Ratoon stunting (RSD)**



**Chlorotic streak**



**RSD – young symptoms**



Leaf scald



Chlorotic streak



Chimera (genetic)



Leaf scald



Chlorotic streak



Chimera

## Bacterial mottle

### Description

- Caused by *Pectobacterium chrysanthemi* (bacterium)
- Favoured by flooding during growing season
- Symptoms: creamy-white regular stripes (1-2 mm wide) or a general chlorotic mottle
- Stunting, excessive tillering
- Control by resistant varieties



### Bacterial mottle differs from:

#### Sclerophthora

- Sclerophthora has a wavy leaf margin
- Sclerophthora causes leaf shredding/drying out of leaf tips, giving the canopy a ragged appearance



Trans.



Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$

Clean  
planting  
material

Flooding

· Chlorotic stripes/excessive tillering

· All year

## Chlorotic streak

### Description

- Caused by *Phytocercomonas venanans* (protozoan)
- Favoured by wet soil conditions/flooding
- Symptoms are irregular chlorotic streaks and internal stalk reddening
- Control is by improved drainage/disease-free planting material/resistant varieties



### Chlorotic streak differs from:

#### Leaf scald

- With CS, leaf stripes are irregular, no 'pencil line' and less reddening of internal stalk tissues
- Leaf scald causes a general chlorosis in the acute stage, chlorotic streak does not



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$\$\$

Clean planting material

Flooding/planting material

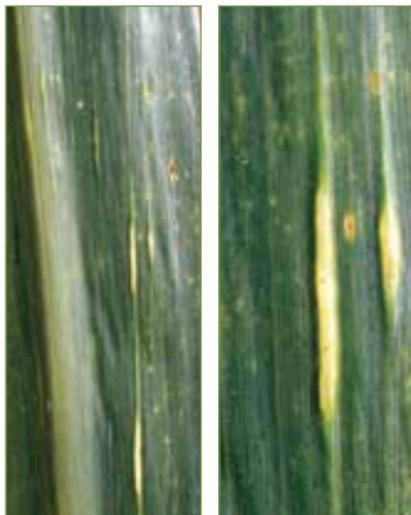
• Leaf stripes

• All year

## Fiji leaf gall

### Description

- Caused by *Fiji disease virus* (FDV)
- Transmitted by planthoppers (*Perkinsiella saccharicida*)
- Characteristic symptom is a gall on the back of the leaf
- Causes stunting, dead spindle, distorted tops and short, erect, dark green leaves
- Control by resistant varieties and clean planting material
- Fiji leaf gall has not been found in commercial cane fields since 2012



### Fiji leaf gall differs from:

#### Pokkah boeng

- In many ways Fiji is similar to pokkah boeng, but the latter has no associated leaf galls

Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$\$\$

Clean  
planting  
material

High vector numbers

• Leaf galls/stunting

• All year

## Leaf scald

### Description

- Caused by *Xanthomonas albilineans* (bacterium)
- Favoured by water stress
- Leaf stripes, pencil line, tissue chlorosis and stalk death are common symptoms
- Control by resistant varieties and clean planting material



### Leaf scald differs from:

#### Chlorotic streak

- Leaf scald has more regular leaf stripes, and stalk death is not unusual
- Transmitted by machinery
- Favoured by dry conditions, not flooding

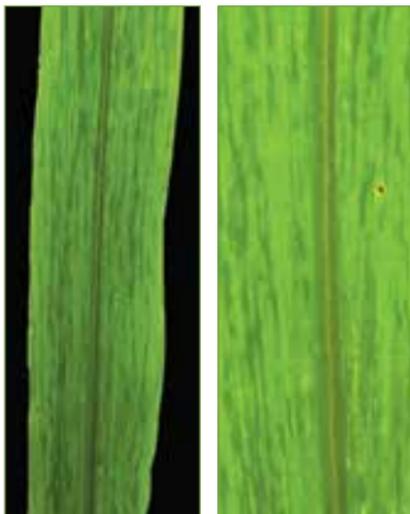


Trans.									soil	
Where?	NSW S C B H N				J F M A M J J A S O N D				\$\$\$	Clean planting material
Stress favours expression	·				Stalk death/leaf stripes				· All year	

## Sugarcane mosaic (SCMV)

### Description

- Caused by sugarcane mosaic virus (a Potyvirus) and spread by aphids
- Seen most easily in young cane/young leaves
- Symptoms are a mosaic leaf pattern and stripes on the young stalk
- Control by resistant varieties



### Sugarcane mosaic differs from:

#### Striate mosaic

- Striate mosaic has very fine striations on the leaf
- Striate mosaic occurs only in the Burdekin, while sugarcane mosaic is normally seen in south Queensland



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$\$

Clean  
planting  
material

Young cane/young leaves

Leaf mosaic

All year

# Pokkah boeng

## Description

- Caused by *Fusarium sacchari* (fungus)
- Favoured by fast cane growth
- Leaf twisting/distortion and 'knife cuts' are common
- Control not usually required

## Pokkah boeng differs from:

### Fiji leaf gall

- Fiji leaf gall causes galls on the back of the leaf
- Pokkah boeng is mainly seen in the peak of the growing season
- Cane will usually recover from pokkah boeng



Trans.									soil	
Where?	NSW S C B H N				J F M A M J J A S O N D				\$	Clean planting material

Fast growth · Twisted/stunted leaves · Wet season

## Ratoon stunting (RSD)

### Description

- Caused by *Leifsonia xyli* subsp. *xyli* (bacterium)
- Losses increased by drought
- No external symptoms besides stunting
- Diagnosis by qPCR or phase contrast microscopy
- Up and down growth characteristic in diseased crop
- Control by machinery sanitation, clean planting material



### RSD differs from:

#### All other diseases

- There are no external diagnostic symptoms with RSD

Trans.									soil
Where?	NSW S C B H N			J F M A M J J A S O N D			\$\$\$	Clean planting material	
When?	Drought			Stunted crop			All year		

## Red rot

### Description

- Caused by a fungus, *Colletotrichum falcatum* (syn. *Glomerella tucumanensis*)
- Favoured by crop stress
- Symptoms are internal stalk reddening with transverse white patches (internal) and stalk death
- Control by resistant varieties



### Red rot differs from:

#### Fusarium sett rot

- Red rot does not cause a purpling of tissues but a reddening, with transverse white patches
- Red rot has a starchy smell, not sour



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$\$

Clean  
planting  
material

Crop stress

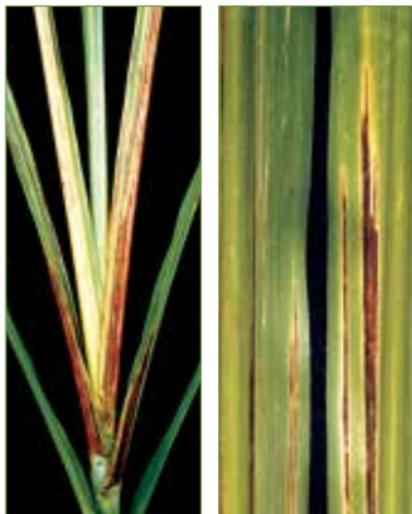
Stalk death/red internal tissues

Mature crop

## Red stripe/Top rot

### Description

- Caused by *Acidovorax avenae* subsp. *avenae* (bacterium)
- Favoured by warm, moist weather
- Symptoms include red leaf stripes and/or a top rot
- Foul odour associated with the base of dead spindle
- Control by resistant varieties



### Red stripe/Top rot differs from:

#### Leaf scald

- Red stripe has red leaf symptoms
- Top rot is also associated with the disease
- Pathogen not primarily spread by mechanical equipment



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$

Clean planting material

Warm, moist weather

• Red stripes/Top rot

• Early/mid wet season

# Sclerophthora

## Description

- Caused by *Sclerophthora macrospora* (oomycete)
- Favoured by flooding, poorly drained soils
- Symptoms include excessive tillering, multiple budding, stunted growth, wavy leaf margins and leaf mottling
- No control usually needed



## Sclerophthora differs from:

### Bacterial mottle

- Sclerophthora has wavy leaf margins and less leaf striping
- The disease is caused by a oomycete – oospores can be seen in affected leaves



Trans.									soil	
Where?	NSW S C B H N				J F M A M J J A S O N D				\$	Clean planting material
	Flooding, poor drainage				Excessive tillering				All year	

# Smut

## Description

- Caused by *Sporisorium scitamineum* (fungus)
- Favoured by hot, dry conditions
- Symptoms include terminal growth ending in a 'whip', grassy growth habit
- Whips sometimes on side shoots
- Control by resistant varieties, and a registered triazole fungicide at planting



## Smut differs from:

### All other diseases

- Smut produces a very characteristic black whip structure from the apical growing point with numerous spores



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$\$\$

Clean  
planting  
material

Hot, dry conditions

· Grassy habit and a whip

· All year

## Striate mosaic (SCSMaV)

### Description

- Caused by sugarcane striate mosaic associated virus (SCSMaV)
- Limited to patches in affected fields
- Symptoms include fine striations in the leaf blade that are difficult to see
- Stunting and stalk death are common in susceptible varieties
- Control by resistant varieties



### Striate mosaic differs from:

#### Sugarcane mosaic

- Striate is limited to soil-associated patches, the vector is unknown and has far less-obvious leaf symptoms
- Stool death occurs
- Striate is limited to the Burdekin



Trans.									soil
Where?	NSW S C B H N				J F M A M J J A S O N D				Clean planting material
					\$\$\$				

Soil-limited patches

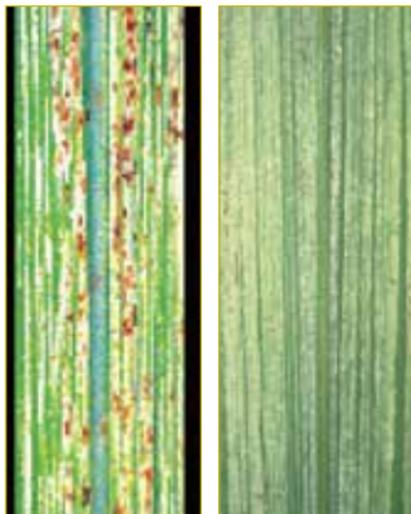
Stunting and death

All year

## Downy mildew

### Description

- Caused by *Peronosclerospora sacchari*; *P. philippinensis*
- Favoured by warm, humid weather
- Symptoms include leaf stripes, leaf shredding and stunting
- Spread by air-borne, fragile spores
- Control by resistant varieties/clean seed/fungicides



### Downy mildew differs from:

#### Bacterial mottle

- Downy mildew has more definite leaf striping
- There is down production with downy mildew on hot, humid nights



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$\$\$

Clean  
planting  
material

Warm, humid weather

Stunting/leaf stripes

All year

## Grassy shoot

### Description

- Caused by a phytoplasma
- Symptoms are excessive tillering with white chlorotic shoots and severe stunting
- Spread is by diseased planting material
- Control by resistant varieties



### Grassy shoot differs from:

#### White leaf

- Grassy shoot is characterised by excessive tillering
- No insect vector has been identified with grassy shoot



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$\$\$

Clean  
planting  
material

Warm weather

Grassy growth, stunting

All year

## Green grassy shoot

### Description

- Caused by a phytoplasma
- Symptoms are excessive tillering (without chlorotic shoots) and stunting
- Spread by diseased planting material (also suspected spread by insect vector)
- Control by resistant varieties and disease-free planting material



### Green grassy shoot differs from:

#### White leaf

- Green grassy shoot has no white leaf symptoms

#### Grassy shoot

- Green grassy shoot does not exhibit leaf chlorosis



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$\$\$

Clean  
planting  
material

Warm weather

Grassy growth, stunting

All year

# Gumming

## Description

- Caused by *Xanthomonas axonopodis* pv. *vasculorum* (bacterium)
- Favoured by high winds, high humidity, wind-blown rain
- Symptoms include leaf stripes, chlorosis and gum pockets within stalks
- Control by resistant varieties



## Gumming differs from:

### Leaf scald

- Leaf stripes caused by gumming are yellow to orange, with non-systemic disease development occurring in older leaves only
- Gumming causes gum pockets within stalks



Trans.									soil
Where?	NSW S C B H N				J F M A M J J A S O N D			\$\$\$	Clean planting material
Warm, humid, windy weather	•	Leaf stripes	•	Wet season					

## Sugarcane streak mosaic (SCSMV)

### Description

- Caused by *Poty* virus in a different genus to SCMV
- Seen most easily in young cane/young leaves
- Symptoms are a mosaic leaf pattern and stripes on the young stalk
- Control by resistant varieties



### Sugarcane streak mosaic differs from:

#### Sugarcane mosaic

- Streak mosaic is caused by a different virus
- Streak mosaic does not yet occur in Australia
- There is no known insect vector for streak mosaic



Trans.



Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$\$

Clean  
planting  
material

Young cane/young leaves

· Leaf mosaic

· All year

## Ramu stunt

### Description

- Caused by *Ramu stunt virus* (RmSV)
- Transmitted by the planthopper *Eumetopina flavipes*
- Symptoms include severe stunting and stool death, a trashy appearance and various leaf stripes and mottling



### Ramu stunt differs from:

#### White leaf

- Obvious white leaves are seen with white leaf

#### Grassy shoot

- Grassy shoot does not cause leaf patterns such as seen with Ramu stunt



Trans.									soil	
Where?					When?				Clean planting material	
NSW S C B H N	J F M A M J J A S O N D				\$\$\$					
Good growth	·	Stunting/stool death/trashy				·	All year			

## White leaf

### Description

- Caused by a phytoplasma
- Favoured by high populations of the vectors (leafhopper *Matsumuratettix hiroglyphicus* and *Yamatotettix flavovittatus*) in summer
- Main symptom is a chlorosis (whitening) of the leaves
- Reduced yield and stalk death also result
- Control by resistant varieties, disease-free planting material and crop termination



### White leaf differs from:

#### Grassy shoot

- White leaf has leaf chlorosis as the main symptom
- White leaf is transmitted by a leafhopper
- Both are transmitted in planting material

Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$\$\$

Clean  
planting  
material

Warm weather

White leaves/stunting

Summer

## Basal stem rot (BSR)

### Description

- Caused by a basidiomycete (fungus)
- Favoured by dry conditions
- Occurs in patches in young plant cane
- Symptoms include stunted growth, poor tillering and sunken brown lesions around the base of shoots
- White stripes on leaves
- Crop recovery favoured by hilling up



### Basal stem rot differs from:

#### Striate mosaic

- BSR also occurs outside the Burdekin
- BSR affects the base of shoots
- BSR leads to a strong mushroom-like smell



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$\$

Clean  
planting  
material

Dry conditions

· Poor patch in young cane

· Plant crop

# Nematodes

## Description

- Caused by various species of nematodes. But the main nematodes are root-lesion (*Pratylenchus* spp.) and root-knot (*Meloidogyne* spp.) nematodes
- Found in all soil types and cane fields in Australia
- Lesion nematode produces lesions on the root surface, and damages fine roots; root-knot nematode produces knots on root
- Control by crop rotation/ nematicides



## Lesion nematodes differ from:

### Pachymetra root rot

- Lesion nematodes don't produce a soft rot of primary roots
- Lesion nematodes are not controlled through resistant varieties

### Pythium root rot

- *Pythium* lesions are more oval shaped and have a more red-black appearance



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$\$\$

Clean planting material

Light soils

· Unthrifty growth/poor root growth

· All year

## Pachymetra root rot

### Description

- Caused by *Pachymetra chaunorhiza* (oomycete)
- Favoured by high rainfall/light soils (some districts)
- Main symptom is a rot of the thicker roots
- Control by resistant varieties
- More important in Queensland than *Pythium*



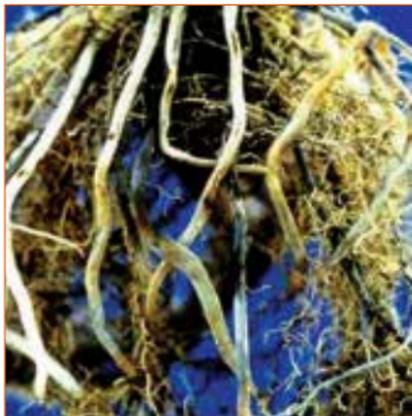
### Pachymetra root rot differs from:

#### Lesion nematode

- *Pachymetra* causes a rot of the root system
- Controlled by resistant varieties

#### Pythium root rot

- *Pachymetra* is favoured by high soil temperatures
- Mainly affects the primary (thick) roots



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$\$\$

Clean planting material

High rainfall/warm conditions

• Root rot

• All year

## Pythium root rot

### Description

- Caused by *Pythium arrhenomanes* (oomycete)
- Favoured by low soil temperatures
- Main symptoms are red lesions on roots and poor fine-root growth
- Not a major disease in Queensland
- No controls necessary



### Pythium root rot differs from:

#### Pachymetra root rot

- *Pythium* causes red root lesions and poor fine-root growth

#### Lesion nematode

- *Pythium* lesions are more oval shaped and have a more red-black appearance



Trans.



soil

Where?

NSW S C B H N

When?

J F M A M J J A S O N D

\$

Clean  
planting  
material

Low soil temperatures

· Poor fine roots

· Winter

# Diagnosis

---

Keep the following in mind:

## **1. Other causes?**

- Not all symptoms are caused by disease

## **2. Diversity of symptoms**

Examine:

- Whole crop, individual stalk, inside the stalk and a hand lens view (mites may be identified with a hand lens, for instance)

*Make a summary of your observations.*

## **3. Investigate other possibilities**

This may involve:

- Slicing stalks
- Finding out the chemicals that have been applied to the crop
- Checking for unusual weather conditions that may have occurred (for instance, lightning)
- Determining the fertilisers applied

## **4. Look for other reasons why the symptoms may be present**

- Relate appearance to the timing of other events, e.g. lightning, severe heat or cold

## **5. Distribution patterns**

Are there any patterns that may link the symptoms with:

- Out-of-field activities, e.g. spray application in an adjoining paddock
- Soil type within the field
- Traffic paths of machinery, e.g. multiple row symptom expression patterns

# Diagnosis

---

- Previous variety history

*Attempt to link symptoms with field patterns.*

## **6. When did the symptoms first occur?**

Find out how long the symptoms have been present.

*This may link the symptoms with an event, either the weather or a farming operation.*

## **7. Is the cane 'growing out' of the symptoms?**

If it is:

- The disease may be a minor one, or
- Symptoms may not be caused by a disease

## **8. See if the symptoms match a disease**

Using the guide, consider:

- Whether symptoms fit with any known diseases
- The consistency of when and where the disease is usually found

The presence of atypical symptoms and occurrence may be enough to suggest a 'no-match'.

*Seek expert advice, if needed.*

## **How to distinguish:**

### **1. Genetic mutations (chimeras)**

- Thin, white streaks, sometimes similar to leaf scald
- Have very definite, very sharp boundaries between the white streak and the green leaf tissue
- Most diseases have a 'fuzzy', diffuse boundary

# Diagnosis

---

## 2. *Nutritional symptoms*

Experience is needed to expertly diagnose nutritional disorders. Clues of nutritional causes include:

- Symptoms only expressing exclusively in either younger or older leaves
- Potential relationship with soil type and fertiliser application dose
- Symptoms linked to leaf structures (for instance, an inter-vein yellowing)

## 3. *Lightning*

Damage can be very spectacular and difficult to determine. Clues are:

- **Timing:** symptoms occur during the storm season
- **Patch occurrence:** symptoms are seen as a round patch with more-severe symptoms in the centre grading out to healthy cane; patches may be about 10 m in diameter
- **Purple leaf symptoms** coupled with stalk death near the centre of the patch

## 4. *Below-ground causation*

- Often there are no above-ground symptoms besides general unthrifty growth
- Growth limitations may occur either in patches or a whole field
- Dig up a few stools and look for shortened discoloured roots and the presence of very limited root growth

## 5. *Cold or heat chlorosis*

- Spectacular white bands running across the leaf blade; there may be a number of bands across a single leaf

# Diagnosis

---

- Occurrence is linked to either:
  - > Unusually cold conditions, or rain, immediately followed by a hot, sunny period
  - > Susceptible varieties (chlorosis usually occurs in only one or two per district)

## Equipment to assist diagnosis

The following equipment will assist in collecting the information you need to make a diagnosis:

Equipment	Use
Hand lens	For close-up examination of symptoms on leaves
Knife	For slicing open stalks to view internal stalk symptoms
Felt pen	For labelling bags/labels
Sealable plastic bags	For collecting specimens to send to relevant experts
Shovel	To dig up stools to examine root systems and to collect soil samples
Camera	To photograph symptoms

# When diseases occur

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## What time of year do you see it?

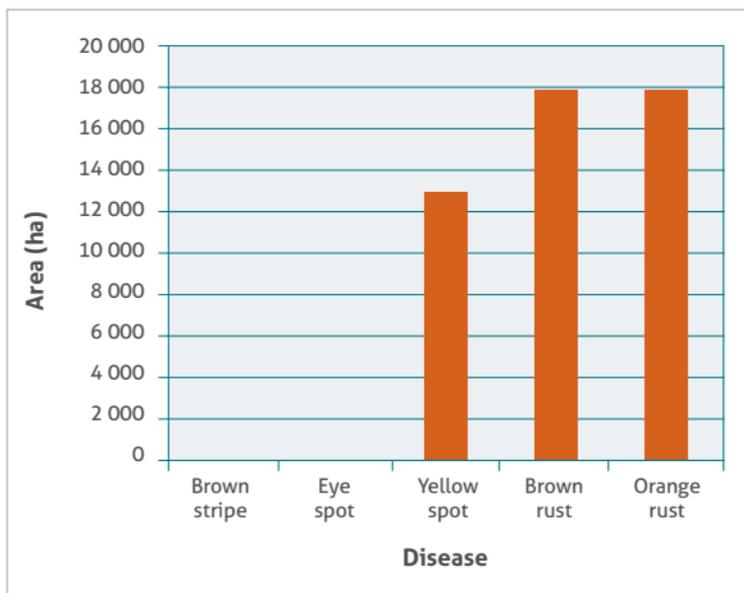
### Brown rust

North .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
South .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
Brown stripe .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
Eye spot .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
Orange rust .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
Red leaf spot .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
Ring spot .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
Yellow spot .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
Bacterial mottle .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
Chlorotic streak .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
Fiji leaf gall .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
Leaf scald .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
Sugarcane mosaic .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
Pokkah boeng .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
Ratoon stunting .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
Red rot .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
Red stripe/Top rot .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
Sclerophthora .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D
Striate mosaic .....	J F M A M J J A S O N D

# Leaf diseases

## Area affected by Australian leaf diseases

Average annual incidence data (1980-2003) in Queensland



**Brown stripe** is associated only with poor soils.

**Eye spot** is associated with a small number of susceptible varieties.

**Yellow spot** is consistently found only in northern and Herbert districts.

**Brown rust** and **orange rust** are found throughout the Queensland industry.

**Ring spot** is commonly seen in every district but because it affects the lower canopy, only minor yield losses occur.

# Leaf diseases

---

## Distribution and importance of exotic leaf diseases

- There are a number we don't yet have in Australia
- Some are close by in PNG
- Listed below is the likely economic effect if any are introduced (however, it should be remembered that extreme susceptibility in a commercial variety may make any one of major significance to our industry)
- Each has characteristic symptoms – especially lesion shape

Disease	Country	Major/Minor
Brown spot	Widely distributed	Minor
Leaf scorch	S & SE Asia, South America, Africa	Major
Target blotch	Widely distributed	Minor
Veneer blotch	SE Asia	Minor
White speck	Widely distributed	Minor
Zonate leaf spot	PNG, USA, Solomon Islands, Samoa	Minor

# Leaf diseases

## Severity

Affected by:

### 1. *Weather*

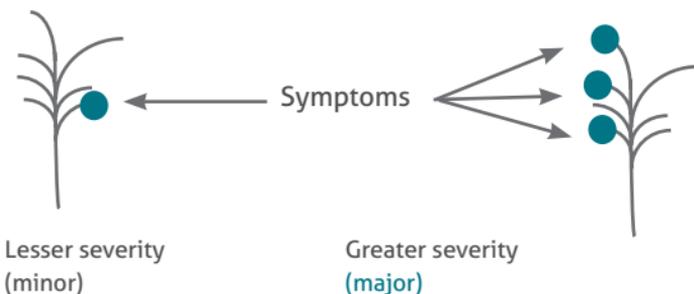
Has a huge influence on occurrence and severity of leaf diseases. Temperature and relative humidity (illustrated below) are the most important factors for spore germination.

#### Spore germination requirements (optimum)

	Relative humidity (%)	Temperature (°C)
Brown rust	> 99	11-27
Orange rust	> 97	17-23
Yellow spot	100	20-30

### 2. *Where in the canopy*

Greatest yield effects occur when the younger 2-4 green leaves in a shoot show obvious disease.



#### Severity Examples

**Minor:** Ring spot principally affects the senescing (old) leaves in the canopy. Although visually spectacular, yield effects are small.

# Leaf diseases

---

**Major:** On the other hand, the **rusts** and **yellow spot** may affect the younger leaves and they have a very significant yield effect.

### 3. *Varietal resistance*

Has a very large effect; control for most diseases is via varietal resistance.

### 4. *Soil parameters*

Such as soil texture and nutritional content.

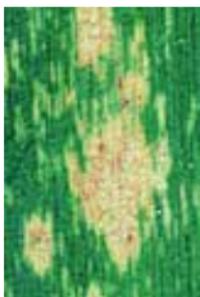
- **Poor nutrition** influences brown stripe
- **Lighter soils** favour the rusts

### 5. *Time of year*

Leaf diseases have greater yield effects when present in the growing crop (tonnes cane). Commercial cane sugar (CCS) drops if the disease persists into, or occurs in, the harvest season.

### Lesion shapes

Lesion shape gives a substantial clue to the identity of the disease.



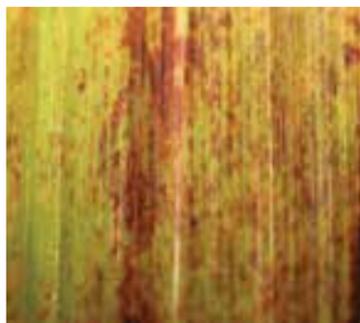
Looking carefully (close-up) at the lesion shape will greatly assist in identification.

# Leaf diseases

---

## Lesion distribution upper and lower leaf surface

Some lesions appear equally on both upper and lower leaf surfaces, some only on the upper surface.



Red leaf spot (upper)



Red leaf spot (lower)



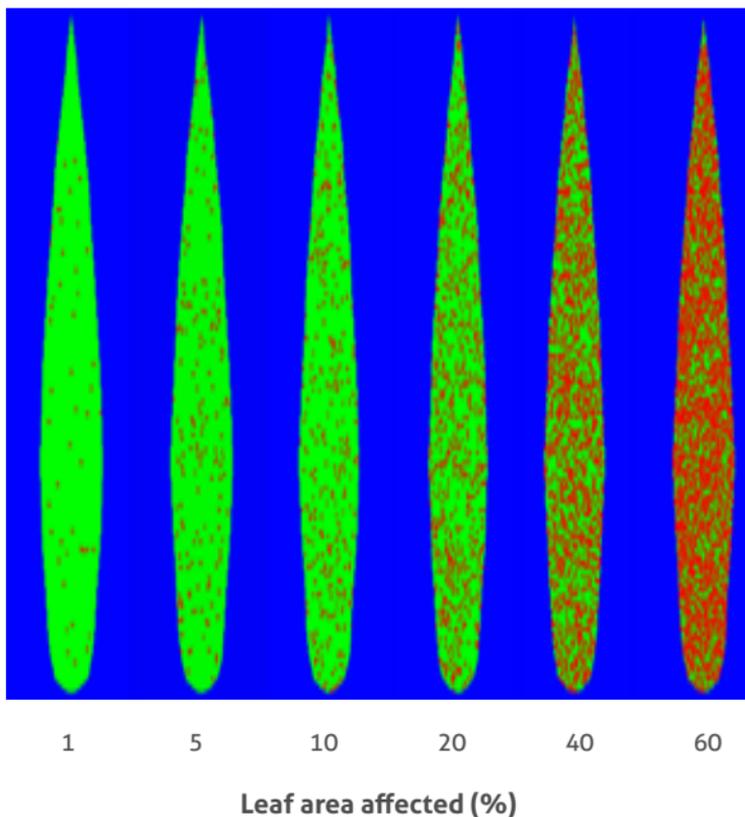
Yellow spot (upper)



Yellow spot (lower)

# Severity assessment

---



## Leaf area affected

The scale above provides a guide to the percentage leaf area affected in diseased sugarcane leaves.

A computer simulation program can be obtained from SRA, Tully, to assist in improving estimation accuracy.

# Severity assessment

---

## Estimating leaf area affected

A uniform objective measure of the leaf area affected by a disease is useful in:

- Estimating areas affected by a disease over several districts
- Estimating yield losses caused by a disease

Research has shown that even 10% leaf area affected in the 5<sup>th</sup> leaf from the spindle in a crop canopy may be enough to significantly reduce sugarcane yields (orange rust).

## Individual ability to estimate leaf area affected

Studies in the USA have shown that:

- Some people are unsuitable as leaf disease estimators
- Others may routinely over- or under-estimate disease levels, and this bias varies with disease severity

## Tip for area estimation

- First estimate the *% leaf area diseased* (dark tissue), then check
- By estimating *% leaf area healthy* (green tissue)

# Planting-material diseases

---

Disease	Pathogen
Fusarium sett rot	<i>Fusarium sacchari</i>
Pineapple sett rot	<i>Ceratocystis paradoxa</i>

## 1. Control

Pineapple sett rot control is principally through fungicide application at planting.

### *Fungicide costs*

- About \$1 m annually in Queensland

## 2. Factors increasing severity

- Dry or wet and cold soil
- Poor-quality planting material (split/cracked/piping)
- Poor fungicide coverage of cut billet ends

## 3. Importance of early diagnosis

Early digging of planting material (2-4 weeks after planting):

- Provides for reliable diagnosis because sett tissues have not excessively deteriorated (few other organisms are there)
- May allow replanting of the crop if pineapple sett rot is diagnosed

# Planting-material diseases

---

## Sett coverage

It is imperative to completely cover the cut ends of setts with fungicide.

## Testing coverage

- Sprays on whole-stick planters can be tested using vegetable dyes (for instance, 'marker dye' from Nufarm)
- Dips in billet planters should also provide coverage of all cut ends
- **Failure to test these systems may lead to germination failure**

## Recommended change times for solutions

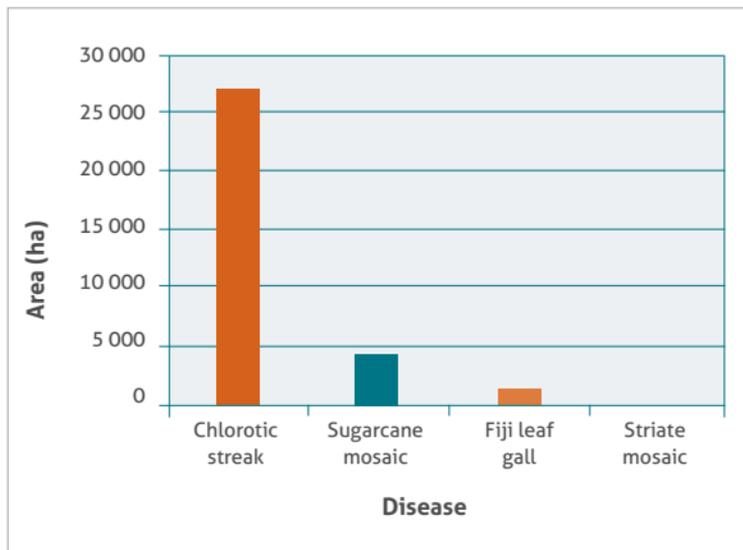
Solutions should be changed weekly in most cases.

# Whole-plant diseases

## Area affected by Australian whole-plant diseases

### CS (protozoan) and viral diseases

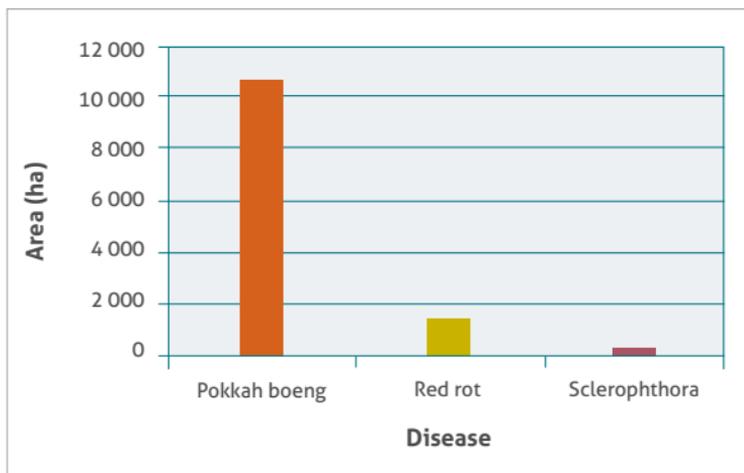
Average annual data (1980-2003) in Queensland



# Whole-plant diseases

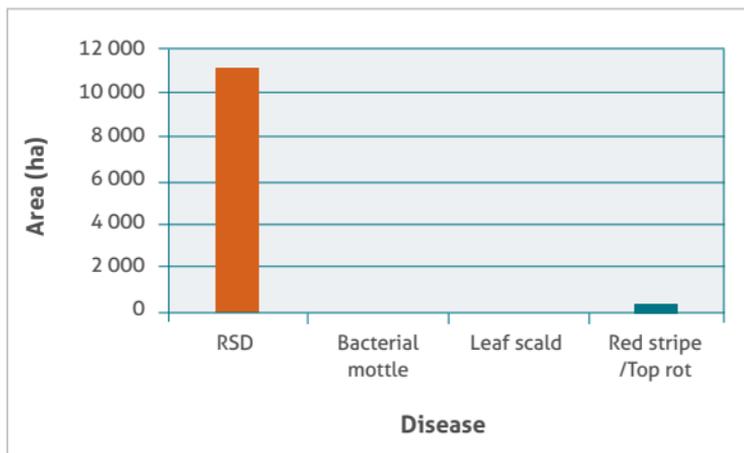
## *Fungal diseases*

Average annual data (1980-2003) in Queensland



## *Bacterial diseases*

Average annual data (1980-2003) in Queensland



# Whole-plant diseases

## Pathogen and importance

- Are those where the pathogen invades the whole plant
- Often cause greater yield loss than other diseases
- Most of our major diseases are whole-plant
- Carry over from one crop to the next

## Pathogens

Disease	Pathogen	Major/Minor
Bacterial mottle	<i>Pectobacterium crysanthemi</i>	Minor
Chlorotic streak	<i>Phytophthora venenata</i>	Major
Fiji leaf gall	<i>Fiji disease virus</i>	Major
Leaf scald	<i>Xanthomonas albilineans</i>	Major
Pokkah boeng	<i>Fusarium sacchari</i>	Minor
Ratoon stunting	<i>Leifsonia xyli</i> subsp. <i>xyli</i>	Major
Red rot	<i>Glomerella tucumanensis</i>	Minor
Red stripe/Top rot	<i>Acidovorax avenae</i> subsp. <i>avenae</i>	Minor
Sclerophthora	<i>Sclerophthora macrospora</i>	Minor
Striate mosaic	<i>Sugarcane striate mosaic associated virus</i>	Minor
Sugarcane mosaic	<i>Sugarcane mosaic virus</i>	Major

# Whole-plant diseases

---

## Control measures

### 1. *Resistant varieties*

- The most important control measure
- Resistance screening of new clones is a major SRA activity
- Appropriate levels of resistance in commercial varieties is critical to maximise profitability

### 2. *Disease-free planting material*

- Normally also very important, since the pathogen lives inside the cane stalk
- Approved seed plots in each mill area supply disease-free planting material

### 3. *Sanitation*

- Important for controlling diseases that spread in cane juice (RSD and leaf scald)

### 4. *Drainage*

- Diseases such as chlorotic streak are favoured by wet soils
- Improved drainage can reduce disease levels

# Whole-plant diseases

## Distribution and importance of exotic whole-plant diseases

- Are those not recorded in Australia
- Some would lead to a significant drop in productivity and profitability
- Some of our best varieties are susceptible to exotic diseases
- Below are major exotic diseases

Disease	Pathogen	Current distribution
Downy mildew	<i>Peronosclerospora sacchari</i>	SE Asia, Pacific Rim
Grassy shoot	Phytoplasma	S & SE Asia
Green grassy shoot	Phytoplasma	S & SE Asia
Gumming	<i>Xanthomonas axonopodis</i> pv <i>vasculorum</i>	Africa, South America, India
Ramu stunt	Ramu stunt virus	PNG
Streak mosaic	Sugarcane streak mosaic virus	S & SE Asia
White leaf	Phytoplasma	S & SE Asia

## Contingency plans

Developed:

- To maximise the possibility of disease eradication, or to minimise yield losses if eradication is not possible
- For the highest risk diseases

# Whole-plant diseases

---

The smut plan was used in 1998 when smut reached Western Australia, and in 2006 when it reached eastern Australia.

## National sugar industry biosecurity plan

Plant Health Australia together with sugar industry groups have developed a national plan for responding to incursions of exotic pests and diseases. Copies of the plan can be obtained from [www.planthealthaustralia.com.au](http://www.planthealthaustralia.com.au).

Outline of plant pest emergency response

### 1. Investigation

- Detection of new pest, investigation by SRA or state agency, samples collected and identified

### 2. Alert

- Australia's Chief Plant Protection Officer notified
- Quarantine restrictions imposed
- Impact evaluated and decision made on response

### 3. Operational

- State agency manages operational responses, e.g. eradication, surveys, trace back, quarantine
- Local pest control command established

### 4. Stand down

- Eradication successful or decision made to move to containment and control
- Containment – quarantine to limit spread to other districts
- Control – resistant varieties, fungicides, hygiene, plough-out

# Queensland minor diseases

---



## Yellow leaf virus (SCYLV)

- Caused by a virus
- Main symptoms: a strong yellowing of the mid-rib
- Symptoms are expressed when the crop is stressed



## Sugarcane bacilliform virus (SCBV)

- Caused by a virus
- Main symptoms: a flecking seen on all leaves
- Chewing canes are more susceptible to the disease



## Banded sclerotial disease

- Caused by a fungus
- Main symptoms: large round lesions on affected leaves
- The disease is rarely seen and has only minor yield effects

# Soil-borne diseases

---

## Hidden

Often soil-borne diseases are unrecognised because they can't be seen without digging up root systems.

In Queensland, they cause the largest economic losses of any type of disease.

## Need for a soil assay

Unless soil or root systems are assessed for disease, there is no way of telling how severe the situation is.

## Assay laboratory

A soil-assay laboratory at SRA can conduct assays for:

- Pachymetra root rot
- Nematodes

Recommendations are sent with the results to guide the farm disease-control program.

## Type of diseases

There are two groups of well-recognised causes for soil-borne diseases:

- Fungi
- Nematodes

# Soil-borne diseases

---

## Nematode count thresholds (per 200 g soil)

Species	Plant/1 ratoon	2 ratoon
<b>Lesion</b> ( <i>Pratylenchus</i> )	300	900-1000
<b>Root-knot</b> ( <i>Meloidogyne</i> )	200	400
<b>Spiral</b> ( <i>Helicotylenchus</i> )	500	1500–2000
<b>Stubby root</b> ( <i>Paratrichodorus</i> )	300	500
<b>Stunt</b> ( <i>Tylenchorhynchus</i> )	500	1500–2000
<b>Dagger</b> ( <i>Xiphinema</i> )	N/A	400

Note:

- Sub-critical populations may cause problems, particularly on sandy soils
- Soil fertility and water availability are critical factors governing yield losses
- Ideal nutrient and water supply may reduce yield losses
- Keep grasses out of fallow rotations and plant legumes to control most nematode species

# Soil-borne diseases

---

## Pachymetra root rot spore count thresholds (,000 per kg soil)

### Standing crops

#### Susceptible varieties (ratings 7-9)

0-30	Nil-low yield loss
30-50	Medium yield loss
> 50	High yield loss

---

#### Intermediate resistance (ratings 4-6)

0-40	Nil-low yield loss
40-70	Medium yield loss
> 70	High yield loss

---

#### High resistance (ratings 1-3)

0-45	Nil yield loss
45-80	Very low yield loss
> 80	Low yield loss

---

### Fallow ground

0-30	Low level
30-50	Moderate level
> 50	High level

# Soil-borne diseases

---

## Soil-assay laboratories

### 1. Locations

#### SRA Tully

216 Dallachy Rd, Silky Oak, QLD 4854

M 0439 027 532 E AssayLabTully@sugarresearch.com.au

#### SRA Woodford

90 Old Cove Road, Woodford, QLD 4514

M 0408 874 429 E AssayLabWoodford@sugarresearch.com.au

#### Costs

A commercial service is available

*Current costs are shown on the forms*

### 2. Forms (available on [sugarresearch.com.au](http://sugarresearch.com.au))

Ensure forms are fully completed. Information is used to:

- Guide recommendations
- Deliver results
- Populate a database to better understand the disease

### 3. Sampling

Contact the relevant assay laboratory for the current sampling protocol.

### 4. Transport

#### Nematodes

Transport conditions are critical for nematode assay samples, as temperatures of 40°C can kill nematodes.

Place nematode samples in a cool esky (do not refrigerate) and transport quickly to the assay laboratory. Do not send samples over a weekend.

Contact: SRA, Woodford

#### Pachymetra root rot

Temperature is not critical and samples can be sent without cooling.

Contact: SRA, Tully

# Quarantine – State

---

## General Biosecurity Obligation

All Queenslanders have a 'general biosecurity obligation' (GBO) under Queensland's *Biosecurity Act 2014*. NSW has very similar legislation with a General Biosecurity Duty under *NSW Biosecurity Act 2015*.

This means that everyone is responsible for managing biosecurity risks that are:

- under their control and
- that they know about, or should reasonably be expected to know about.

Individuals and organisations whose activities pose a biosecurity risk must:

- take all reasonable and practical steps to prevent or minimise each biosecurity risk
- minimise the likelihood of causing a 'biosecurity event', and limit the consequences if such an event is caused
- prevent or minimise the harmful effects a risk could have, and not do anything that might make any harmful effects worse.

More information about the *Biosecurity Act 2014* and underlying *Biosecurity Regulation 2016* and *Biosecurity Manual* can be found at the Queensland Government website.

# Quarantine – State

---

## Biosecurity Zones

There are six sugarcane biosecurity zones in Queensland (*Biosecurity Act 2014, Biosecurity Regulation 2016*), and two far northern biosecurity zones. These zones separate areas of high biosecurity risk from areas of low biosecurity risk.

Movement of sugarcane plants, plant parts, soil or farm equipment into or out of biosecurity zones requires a permit. Permits must be issued by Biosecurity Queensland or their authorised officers through the Queensland Government website or call **13 25 23**.

For machinery inspections, contact your local productivity service.

A map showing the biosecurity zones in Queensland is on pages 108-109.

# General

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## Background

Sugarcane diseases affect thousands of hectares of Australian sugarcane crops each year. Varietal resistance, rather than chemicals, is the main control measure.

## What is resistance and tolerance?

- **Resistant varieties** are able to resist infection and/or colonisation by the pathogen
- **Tolerant varieties** are able to yield well even though infected by the pathogen (i.e. there are some tolerant susceptible varieties)

## Resistance ratings

1-9 sliding scale:

*There are 3 categories:*

**1-3: Resistant**

**4-6: Intermediate**

**7-9: Susceptible**

All commercial varieties are assessed for resistance to major diseases in specifically designed trials.

## Major diseases in Australia

<b>Viral:</b>	Fiji leaf gall, Sugarcane mosaic
<b>Bacterial:</b>	Leaf scald, ratoon stunting
<b>Fungal:</b>	Orange and brown rusts, yellow spot, Pachymetra root rot, pineapple sett rot and smut

## Minor diseases

Some may become major with the widespread commercial cultivation of a susceptible variety. Details are included in this guide.

# General

---

## Economic effects

Diseases are generally well controlled in Queensland. Some leaf diseases, and a couple of easily transmitted endemic diseases, still cause significant yield losses each year.

## Abbreviations

SHWT = Short Hot-Water Treatment

LHWT = Long Hot-Water Treatment

CSLHWT = Cold-Soak Long Hot-Water Treatment

## Hot water treatment

SHWT = 50°C for 30 minutes (controls chlorotic streak)

LHWT = 50°C for 3 hours (RSD control)

CSLHWT = 40+ hours in cold water plus 3 hours at 50°C (controls leaf scald)

## RSD

**RSD transmission capability:** One (1) diseased stick going through a whole-stalk planter may lead to disease in the next 100 planted setts.

**RSD survival time on knives:** Less than 12 days.

## Sanitation

**Cane knife steriliser** (quaternary-ammonium compounds):

- Clean all metal surfaces thoroughly before applying sterilant at recommended dose
- Allow five (5) minutes contact with the solution to ensure sterilisation
- Supplier: Sipcam ([sipcam.com.au](http://sipcam.com.au))

# General

---

## **Methylated spirits** (for rapid sterilisation):

Mix 70 parts 'metho' with 30 parts water. This concentration is more effective than stronger solutions.

It provides instant sterilisation (on clean surfaces). The solution does not break down in the short term (period of weeks). It is very suitable for cane knives and other exposed surfaces.

Be cautious regarding the fire hazard. Consider application with a household trigger-pack (spray bottle) and labelling requirements for dangerous goods. Cleaning is still essential.

## **Pachymetra root rot**

### **1. Spore life**

Spores (formed in diseased roots) are the main survival structure. These last for up to five years in soil. Keeping spore levels low is important in management. Exposing the soil to the sun will have minimal impact on disease levels.

### **2. Distribution**

Spore levels are much higher in the cane row (up to 20 times higher than in the inter-row).

### **3. Transmission**

The disease has no swimming spore. Transmission into disease-free fields probably occurs through mud on machinery.

### **4. Favourable conditions for disease**

Susceptible varieties, high rainfall, lighter soils (central and southern Queensland more particularly).

## **Soil test**

Available through SRA, Tully and Woodford (commercial service). Contact details same as pg 87. Recommendations are attached to the results. Turnaround time for the assay is 2 weeks.

# General

---

## Nematodes

### 1. Populations

Vary greatly through the season and with growth conditions. Growth effects need to be interpreted in the light of plant growth conditions. Can be high even on heavier textured soils.

### 2. Species

A range of species is found in canefields. *Pratylenchus zae* (lesion nematode) occurs in almost all canefields and is the most important. *Meloidogyne* species (root-knot nematodes) are relatively common and are also important.

### 3. Resistance

Resistant varieties have not yet been identified.

### 4. Control

Is through cultural means (farming systems).

### 5. Soil test

Available through SRA. Samples must be kept cool (less than 30°C) in transit but do not refrigerate. Advise SRA by email ([assaylabwoodford@sugarresearch.com.au](mailto:assaylabwoodford@sugarresearch.com.au)) of samples sent. Recommendations are included with the results.

## Approved seed plots

These are propagation plots in each mill area comprising the main commercial varieties that have been subject to:

- Hot-water treatment (to control systemic diseases such as RSD and leaf scald)
- Inspections for other diseases and correct identity

# General

---

It is very important for farmers to regularly access approved seed plot material to minimise disease incidence and yield losses resulting from RSD and other systemic diseases. Plots are usually organised for each mill area by Cane Productivity Service staff.

## Disease inspections

Critical in propagation plots to avoid widespread infection in a whole region.

## RSD

The following is a guide to sampling for RSD in approved seed plots. Contact SRA RSD assay laboratory to discuss sampling requirements for other plant sources and current sampling recommendations.

- Sample at least 50-100 stalks/variety
- Bulk 16 xylem or the extract from 50 LSBs into a 5 ml tube
- Plots of varieties less than 200 m require 10-50 stalks per plot

Xylem and LSB samples are assayed using a quantitative PCR (qPCR) test. Send samples to the diagnostic laboratory at SRA IRIS.

For more information please contact SRA, RSD Lab  
M 0436 851 754 E [RSDLab@sugarresearch.com.au](mailto:RSDLab@sugarresearch.com.au)

## Other diseases

Inspect for other diseases, and impure varieties, by walking each plot at least 3 times each year (young cane/advanced tillering/ 10-12 months of age). If any diseases of note are suspected or if you require further information contact SRA.

# Glossary

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## Chimera

Genetic variation with thin white streaks and very definite, sharp margins

---



## Chlorosis

Absence (partial or complete) of normal green colour

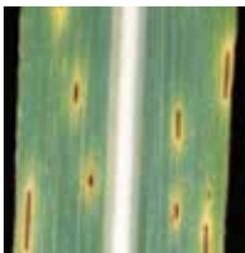
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## Gall

A localised proliferation of tissue producing a swelling

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## Halo

Ring of chlorotic tissue around a lesion

# Glossary

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## Lesion

A localised area of diseased tissue

---



## Necrotic tissue

Dead tissue

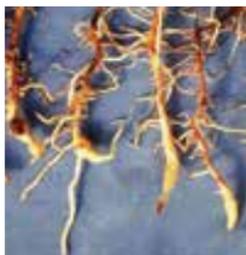
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## Pencil line

Discoloured single vascular bundle in a leaf (leaf scald)

---



## Root-knot

Knobby growth on roots

# Glossary

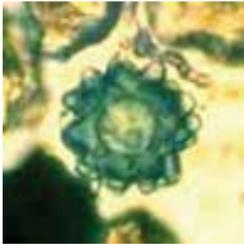
---



## Runner

Chlorotic or necrotic tissue extending away toward the leaf tip from a lesion

---



## Spore

Fungal reproductive structure (equivalent to seed)

---



## Systemic

Occurring throughout the plant (photo is example only)

---



## Whip

A black whip structure arising from the apical growing point

# Index

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Page numbers in bold indicate the main references.

## A

<i>Acidovorax avenae</i> subsp. <i>avenae</i> .....	48, 79
Acknowledgments .....	106
Aphids .....	44
Approved seed plots .....	80, <b>93-94</b>

## B

Bacterial mottle .....	10, <b>40</b> , 49, 52, 67, 78-79
Banded sclerotial disease .....	83
Basal stem rot (BSR) .....	15, <b>59</b>
Bayleton .....	76
Biosecurity plan .....	82
Biosecurity zone ma.....	<b>108-109</b>
<i>Bipolaris sacchari</i> .....	23
<i>Bipolaris stenospila</i> .....	22
Brown rust .....	7, 19-20, <b>21</b> , 24, 67-68, 70, 90, 106
Brown spot .....	8, 28-29, <b>30</b> , 69, 106
Brown stripe .....	7, 19-20, <b>22</b> , 23, 30, 67-68, 71
Bumper .....	76

## C

Cane sett treatment .....	76
Cane strike .....	76
<i>Ceratocystis paradoxa</i> .....	37, 75
<i>Cercospora longipes</i> .....	30
Chimera (genetic effect) .....	39, <b>64</b> , 95

# Index

---

- Chlorosis ..... 40-41, 43, 53-55, 58, 65-66, **95**  
Chlorotic streak ..... 11, 38-39, **41**, 43, 67, 77, 79-80, 91  
Cold or heat chlorosis ..... **65-66**  
Computer simulation program ..... **73**  
Contingency plans ..... **81-82**

## D

- Deightoniella papuana* ..... **33**  
*Dimeriella sacchari* ..... **25**  
Disease key ..... **6**  
Disease-free planting material ..... 18, **80**, 93  
Disinfectant ..... **91-92**  
Downy mildew ..... 13, **52**, 81

## E

- Elsinoe sacchari* ..... **34**  
Equipment to assist diagnosis ..... **66**  
*Eumetopina flavipes* ..... **57**  
Eye spot ..... 7, 19-20, 22, **23**, 26, 30, 67-68

## F

- Fiji disease virus* ..... **42**, 79  
Fiji leaf gall ..... 11, **42**, 45, 67, 77, 79, 90  
Fungicides ..... 75-76  
Further information ..... **107**  
*Fusarium sacchari* ..... 36, **45**, 75, 79  
Fusarium sett rot ..... 10, **36**, 37, 47, 75

# Index

---

## G

Gall .....	6, 42, 45, 95
General biosecurity obligation (GBO) .....	88
Genetic mutations (chimeras) .....	39, 64, 95
<i>Gloeocercospora sorghi</i> .....	35
<i>Glomerella tucumanensis</i> .....	47, 79
Glossary .....	95-97
Grassy shoot .....	14, 53, 54, 57-58, 81, 106
Green grassy shoot .....	14, 54, 81
Gumming .....	14, 55, 81

## H

Halo .....	22-23, 30, 95
<i>Helminthosporium</i> sp. ....	32
Hot water treatment .....	91, 93

## I

Icons .....	17-18
-------------	-------

## L

Leaf diseases Australian	
• Area affected .....	68, 73-74
• Quick comparison – close-up .....	20
• Quick comparison – whole leaf .....	19
• Time of year .....	67, 71

# Index

---

## Leaf diseases exotic

- Distribution and importance ..... 69
- Quick comparison – close-up ..... 29
- Quick comparison – whole leaf ..... 28

## Leaf diseases general

- Lesion shapes ..... 71-72
- Relative humidity ..... 70
- Severity ..... 70-71
- Severity assessment ..... 73-74
- Severity assessment (tips for area estimation) ..... 74
- Soil parameters ..... 71
- Temperature ..... 70
- Time of year ..... 71
- Varietal resistance ..... 71

Leaf scald .. 11, 38-39, 41, **43**, 48, 55, 64, 67, 78-80, 90, 91, 93, 96

Leaf scorch ..... 9, 28-29, **31**, 69

*Leifsonia xyli* subsp. *xyli* ..... **46**, 79

*Leptosphaeria sacchari* ..... **26**

Lesion ..... 21-27, 30-35, 59-60, 62, 69, 71-72, 83, 95, **96**, 97

Lightning ..... 63, **65**

## M

Major diseases in Australia ..... **90**

*Matsumuratettix hiroglyphicus* ..... **58**

*Meloidogyne* ..... **60**, 85, 93

Metric conversion ..... **110**

*Mycovellosiella koepkei* ..... **27**

# Index

---

## N

Necrotic tissue .....	32, <b>96</b> , 97
Nematode population thresholds .....	<b>85</b>
Nematodes .....	15, <b>60</b> , 61-62, 84-85, 87, 93
Nutritional symptoms .....	<b>65</b>

## O

Orange rust .....	7, 19-21, <b>24</b> , 67-68, 70, 74, 90
-------------------	---

## P

<i>Pachymetra chaunorhiza</i> .....	<b>61</b>
Pachymetra root rot .....	15, 60, <b>61</b> , 62, 84, 86-87, 90, 92
Pachymetra root rot population thresholds .....	<b>86</b>
<i>Pectobacterium chrysanthemi</i> .....	<b>40</b> , 79
Pencil line .....	39, 41, 43, <b>96</b>
<i>Perkinsiella saccharicida</i> .....	<b>42</b>
<i>Peronosclerospora sacchari</i> .....	<b>52</b>
<i>Phytocercomonas venanatanans</i> .....	<b>41</b>
Pineapple sett rot .....	10, 36, <b>37</b> , 75-76, 90
Planting-material diseases	
• Fungicides .....	<b>76</b>
• General information .....	<b>75</b>
Pokkah boeng .....	12, 42, <b>45</b> , 67, 78
<i>Poty viruses</i> .....	<b>44</b>
<i>Pratylenchus</i> .....	<b>60</b> , 85, 93
<i>Puccinia kuehnii</i> .....	<b>24</b>
<i>Puccinia melanocephala</i> .....	<b>21</b>

# Index

---

- Pythium arrhenomanes* ..... 62  
Pythium root rot ..... 15, 60-61, 62, 106

## Q

- Quarantine – state ..... 88-89  
Queensland minor diseases ..... 83

## R

- Ramu stunt ..... 14, 57, 81  
Ratoon stunting (RSD) ..... 12, 38, 46, 67, 78-80, 90-91, 93-94  
Red leaf spot ..... 8, 19-20, 25, 27, 67, 72  
Red rot ..... 12, 47, 67, 78-79  
Red stripe/Top rot ..... 12, 48, 67, 78-79  
Resistance ratings ..... 90  
Ring spot ..... 8, 19-20, 22-23, 25, 26, 32-33, 67-68, 70  
Root-knot ..... 60, 85, 93, 96  
RSD transmission ..... 91  
Runner ..... 22-23, 26, 30, 97

## S

- Sanitation treatments ..... 91-92  
*Sclerophthora macrospora* ..... 49, 79  
Sclerophthora stunt ..... 13, 40, 49, 67, 78-79  
Sett rot fungicides ..... 76  
Smut ..... 13, 50, 82, 90  
Soil assay laboratory ..... 84, 87  
Soil-borne diseases general ..... 84  
Spore ..... 21, 24, 31, 37, 49, 50, 52, 70, 86, 92, 97

# Index

---

<i>Sporisorium scitamineum</i> .....	50
Sportak .....	76
<i>Stagonospora sacchari</i> .....	31
Striate mosaic .....	13, 44, 51, 59, 67, 77, 79, 106
<i>Sugarcane bacilliform virus</i> (SCBV) .....	83
Sugarcane biosecurity zones .....	89, 108-109
Sugarcane mosaic.....	11, 44, 51, 56, 67, 77, 79, 90, 106
Sugarcane streak mosaic.....	14, 56, 81
Systemic .....	93-94, 97

## T

Target blotch .....	9, 28-29, 32, 33, 69
Testing spray coverage .....	76
Tilt .....	76

## U

Understanding the layout .....	16
--------------------------------	----

## V

Veneer blotch .....	9, 28-29, 33, 69, 106
---------------------	-----------------------

## W

Whip .....	50, 97
White leaf .....	15, 53-54, 57, 58, 81, 106
White speck .....	9, 28-29, 34, 69
Whole-plant diseases – Australian	
• Area affected .....	77-78
• Control measures .....	80

# Index

---

- Pathogen and importance ..... 79
  - Quick comparison – internal stalks ..... 38
  - Quick comparison – leaf streaks ..... 39
  - Time of year ..... 67
- Whole-plant diseases – Exotic
- Contingency plans ..... 81-82
  - Distribution and importance ..... 81

## X

- Xanthomonas albilineans* ..... 43, 79
- Xanthomonas axonopidos* pv. *vasculorum* ..... 55, 81

## Y

- Yellow leaf virus ..... 83, 106
- Yellow spot ..... 8, 19-21, 24-26, 27, 35, 67-68, 70-72, 90

## Z

- Zonate leaf spot ..... 10, 28-29, 35, 69, 106

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## Further information

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A Guide to Sugarcane Diseases (edited by P Rott, RA Bailey, JC Comstock, BJ Croft, AS Saumtally). Published by CIRAD and ISSCT, 2000. ISBN 2-87614-386-0.

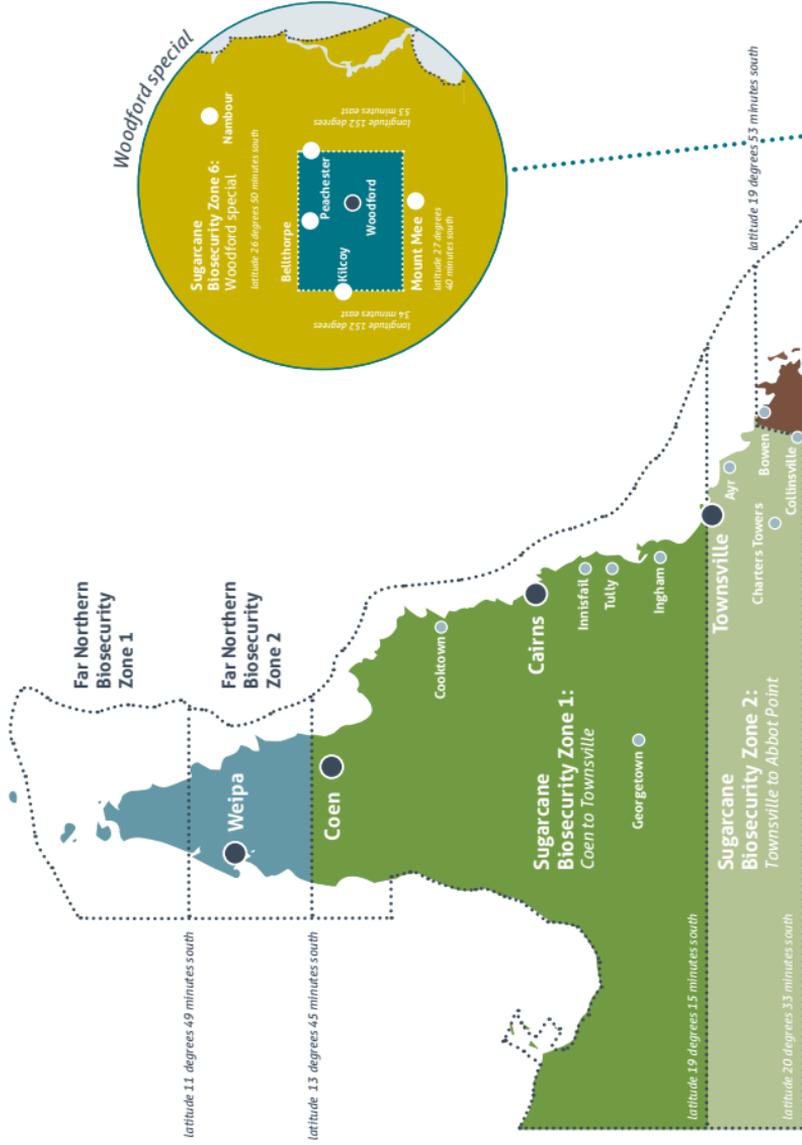
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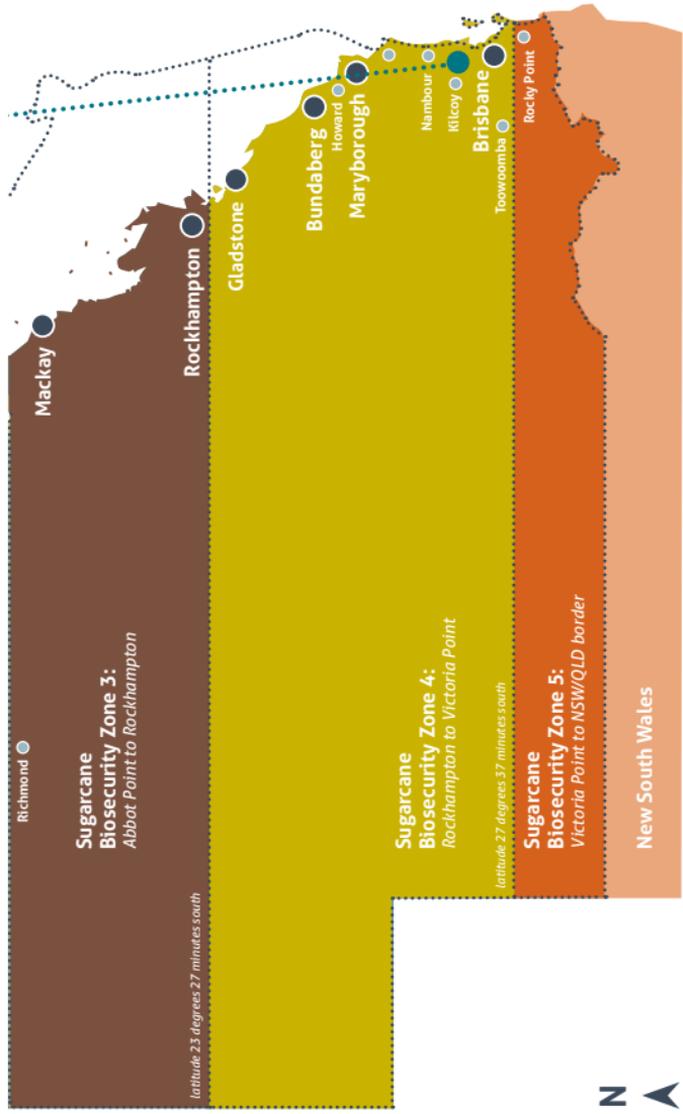
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# 108 BIOSECURITY ZONE MAP





# Metric conversion table

Metric	Measurement
1 inch	25.4 mm
1 foot	0.305 m
1 chain	20.117 m
1 chain/acre	49.709 m/ha
1 mile	1.609 km
1 mile/gallon	0.354 km/L
1 pound	0.454 kg
1 hundredweight	50.803 kg
1 ton	1.016 t
1 ton/acre	2.511 t/ha
1 bag/acre	123.550 kg/ha
1 acre	0.405 ha
1 fluid ounce	28.410 mL
1 gallon	4.546 L
1 gallon/acre	11.233 L/ha
1 mile/hour	1.609 km/h
1 horsepower	0.746 kw
1 pound/square inch	6.897 kPa

## ***Poisons information***

Safety Data Sheets

**13 11 26**

[chemicalsafety.com/sds-search/](https://chemicalsafety.com/sds-search/) **OR**  
[safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/hazards/chemicals/safety-data-sheets](https://safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/hazards/chemicals/safety-data-sheets)



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The *Diseases of Australian Sugarcane Field Guide* contains simply presented information and photos on the sugarcane diseases in Australia. All Australian diseases of importance are included, along with major exotic diseases in neighbouring countries.

The guide is designed for researchers, extension and quarantine staff, as well as farmers, harvester operators, consultants, private contractors and agribusiness personnel.



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