

COMUNICAÇÃO CIENTÍFICA

OCCURRENCE AND DAMAGE BY *Dichelops (Neodichelops) melacanthus* (DALLAS) (HETEROPTERA: PENTATOMIDAE) ON CORN

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RESUMO

Ocorrência e Danos de *Dichelops (Neodichelops) melacanthus* (Dallas) (Heteroptera: Pentatomidae) em Milho

É relatada pela primeira vez a ocorrência do percevejo *Dichelops (Neodichelops) melacanthus* (Dallas) atacando plântulas de milho, *Zea mays* L. no município de Rio Brillhante, Mato Grosso do Sul. O inseto causou murchamento nas plântulas ao se alimentar próximo ao colo. Nos locais de alimentação foram observadas pontuações escuras nas folhas novas do interior do cartucho. Observou-se em média 6 percevejos adultos/10m de fileira e cerca de 56% das plântulas com sinais de ataque.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Insecta, percevejo, planta hospedeira.

During October 1993 we detected for the first time the occurrence of a stink bug species, *Dichelops (Neodichelops) melacanthus* (Dallas) attacking seedlings of corn, *Zea mays* L. in Rio Brillhante County (21° 51'S latitude, 54° 32'W longitude) in Mato Grosso do Sul State, Brazil. The bug was found infesting an area of ca. 1000 acres cultivated with corn. Insects were found feeding on seedlings (15-25 days old) on the stem close to the soil, usually in an upside down position. Preliminary surveys indicated a mean of 6.5 adults/10 m of row. Infested plants showed symptoms of wilting and feeding marks at the feeding sites. Samples taken on 10 m of row indicated a mean of 56.0% of plants with signs of attack by the bugs.

A similar report of attack by *Dichelops* (possibly *melacanthus*) on seedling corn was observed during the summer (November-December) of 1993 in Cascavel (24° 56'S latitude, 53° 26'W longitude) and in Campo Mourão Counties (24° 3'S latitude, 52° 22'W longitude)

Received 04/08/94. Accepted 03/27/95.

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in Paraná State (R. Bianco, personal communication to ARP). We could not find any possible explanation for these outbreaks of *D. melacanthus* on corn during 1993. We can only speculate that the newly established areas with corn, particularly in Mato Grosso do Sul, and the elimination of native host plants may have lead the bugs to infest corn seedlings.

D. melacanthus has been reported to occur in several countries of South America, being a very similar species to *D. furcatus* (F.) and *D. phoenix* Grazia (Grazia 1978). *D. furcatus* has been reported to occur on soybean, *Glycine max* (L.) Merrill as a secondary pest since the mid 70's (Heinrichs 1976, Panizzi *et al.* 1977). Later, *D. melacanthus* was also reported to occur on soybean (Corso 1984, Corrêa-Ferreira 1986; see also review by Panizzi & Slansky 1985). It is possible that misidentifications involving *D. furcatus* and *D. melacanthus* have occurred, and that any of the species or both could be occurring in soybean fields.

In conclusion, at this point we do not know the reasons for the outbreaks in two distinct areas of *D. melacanthus* on corn fields. Based on what was found in the literature, apparently this pentatomid is more related to plants of the family Leguminosae rather than Gramineae. Clearly further research is needed to elucidate if this observed association of *D. melacanthus* and corn is fortuitous or not.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Dr. Miriam Becker, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, for the identification of the insect.

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