Gynaikothrips uzeli

Introduction

Gynaikothrips uzeli Zimmerman was first reported in the US occurring on Ficus Benjamina in Florida in 2003. Since then this pest has been intercepted on *Ficus* spp. in the Caribbean region- Belize & Trinidad. It is a major pest of ornamentals- *Ficus* spp..

Identity

Authority	:Zimmerman
Classification	
Kingdom	:Animalia
Phylum	:Arthropoda
Class	:Insecta
Order	:Thysanoptera
Family	:Phlaeothripidae
Genus	:*Gynaikothrips*
Species	:*uzeli*
Synonyms	:
Common names	:Cuban Laurel thrips
Role	:Pest

Signs and Symptoms

Foliage infested with *G.uzeli* becomes galled and appear distorted and gnarled. Infestations cause premature leaf drop and stunted growth.

Morphology

Egg – The egg is cylindrical with rounded ends, smooth and translucent white

Larva- 1st larva is a tiny, translucent white insect. It is almost oval in shape. 2nd stage is translucent white and similar to the adult in size and shape. The abdominal segments taper from the thorax. The posterior tube becomes dark in older larvae and is held pointing up. Both instars have red eyes.

Fig. 1 Adult
Photo credit: Deoraj Lalchan-Vine
CARINET/CariPestNet

Prepupa and Pupa – the prepupa is similar to the 2nd antennae are folded back over the head.

Adult – The adult (Fig. 1) is 2.5 to 3.6mm in length and is dark brown to black in colour.

Biology and Ecology

Life cycle – Eggs are laid in large numbers inside the surface of the curled leaf. All stages of development can be found at any time within the pocket galls. Development from egg to fertile females takes about 30 days.

Dispersal/Vector

Adult thrips are active fliers and are dispersed mainly via wind currents.

Management

Cultural Control

G. uzeli only attacks the tender new foliage on small plants. It should be possible to prune out the new growth and eliminate the thrips population. Consequently there is no suitable foliage for feeding and oviposition and the infestation should die out before new growth emerges. Use of a resistant species of *Ficus* is also recommended.

Biological Control

– Two anthocorid bugs – *Macrotacheliella laevis* Champion and *Cardiastethus rugicollis* Champion have been reported to be predators of the Cuban laurel thrips in Puerto Rico and should be effective against G. uzeli.

Anthocorid predator *Montandoniola moraguesi* above and *Gynaikothrips uzeli* below USDA-Agric., Research Services

Chemical Control

According to Buss (2003) the use of synthetic systemic pesticides e.g Abamectin. Acephate, Carbaryl as a soil drench is effective in the control of thrips. Some pyrethroids and botanicals e.g Azardiractin are also recommended.

Hosts Notes

This pest is found mainly on *Ficus spp*, Indian Laurel, Indian Rubber plant, weeping fig, and various shrubs and herbs.

Distribution

G. uzeli is a pantropical species and occurs wherever *Ficus spp* .is planted in USA – Florida, Texas, California, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, South America and the Caribbean

Bibliography

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