

Pacific Pests, Pathogens and Weeds - Online edition

Coffee thread blight (199)

Common Name

Thread blight, koleroga disease, black rot.

Scientific Name

Pellicularia koleroga. The fungus is also known as *Corticium koleroga*, which is the name of the sexual state of the fungus. The name *Pellicularia koleroga* probably includes a number of species.

Distribution

Asia, Africa (restricted), North, South and Central America, the Caribbean, Europe (restricted), Oceania. It is recorded from American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and Vanuatu.

Hosts

Coffee (*Coffea arabica* and *Coffea canephora*), black pepper, capsicum, citrus, ginger, mahogany, tea.

Symptoms & Life Cycle

The fungus forms mats and threads of light-coloured growth on the underside of leaves and twigs (Photo 1). At first, the leaves appear light grey and dry. Later, the leaves blacken and fall. In severe cases the dead leaves become detached from the branches but are held in place by the threads of the fungus (Photo 2). Dieback may follow the fall of the leaves.

Impact

An important and destructive disease of many hosts in wet tropical countries. There are no reports of the extent of the damage.

Detection & inspection

Look for the white threads of the fungus forming webs over the underside of leaves, and causing leaf fall. Look for the black threads of the fungus that often hold the leaves in place. Compare with other thread blights, e.g., white thread blight, *Marasmiellus* (*Marasmius*) *scandens* (see **Fact Sheet no. 15**), and horse hair blight, *Marasmius crinis-equi* (see **Fact Sheet no. 05**).

Management

CULTURAL CONTROL

- Prune branches 30 cm below the affected part. Remove the prunings from the plantation and burn them.
- Reduce shade levels; consult agricultural authorities for information on the density of shade trees required.

CHEMICAL CONTROL

It is unlikely that this disease is of such economic importance that chemical control would be needed. If it were, use a copper spray.

When using a pesticide, always wear protective clothing and follow the instructions on the product label, such as dosage, timing of application, and pre-harvest interval. Recommendations will vary with the crop and system of cultivation. Expert advice on the most appropriate pesticides to use should always be sought from local agricultural authorities.



Photo 1. White thread-like strands of the fungus, *Pellicularia koleroga*, on the underside of coffee leaves.



Photo 2. Threads of the fungus, *Pellicularia koleroga*, attached to the leaves of coffee (centre) having killed the leaves.

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Photos 1&2 Kohler F, et al. (1997) Diseases of cultivated crops in Pacific Island countries. South Pacific Commission. Pirie Printers Pty Limited, Canberra, Australia.

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