

CITRUS PEST SPOTLIGHT

Citrus red mite

By Michael E. Rogers



Fig. 1 (above). Adult female of the citrus red mite, *Panonychus citri* (McGregor) (Acari: Tetranychidae)



Fig. 2 (right). Leaf drop (upper tree canopy) resulting from feeding damage caused by the citrus red mite during the winter

IDENTIFICATION

Adults and larvae are dark-red to purple in color and are best observed using a 10x hand lens. Females are round in shape with short legs whereas males are smaller, flattened in appearance and have long legs. In addition to its red color, another prominent feature distinguishing the citrus red mite from other mite species is the presence of long hairs, which appear either pink or white in color, protruding from the numerous bumps present on the body of the mite. Eggs are round, red in color and, when using a hand lens, a stalk can be observed protruding upward from the egg with multiple threads extending to the surface of the leaf anchoring the egg in place.

DAMAGE

The citrus red mite is primarily a pest of citrus leaves and is typically found feeding on the upper leaf surface. These mites insert their piercing-sucking mouthparts into the leaf tissue and ingest cell contents, resulting in an etching or stippling of the leaf surface. As a result of such feeding, significant leaf drop can occur. The presence of dead leaves remaining on affected branches is referred to as “firing” and is a precursor to leaf drop associated with feeding damage by the citrus red mite. Severe leaf drop can lead to an overall reduction in tree health and can even result in fruit drop if trees are severely stressed. Occasionally, red mites may be observed feeding on the surface of green fruit, but damage to fruit is not common.

MANAGEMENT

Similar to other species of spider mites, populations of the citrus red mite increase most rapidly during prolonged dry periods with low relative humidity. Thus, damaging populations are most likely to occur during fall, winter and early spring months in Florida (November to June). Use of a miticide for control of citrus red mite may be needed when populations reach an average of five to 10 mites per leaf.

Michael E. Rogers is an associate professor of entomology at the University of Florida's Citrus Research and Education Center in Lake Alfred.

HLB confirmed in Texas

By Ernie Neff

Agriculture officials in mid-January confirmed the first detection of HLB, or greening disease, in Texas.

Texas Citrus Mutual President



Ray Prewett said HLB was confirmed in a tree from a commercial Valencia orange grove at San Juan, in Hidalgo County.

“It’s really too

early to speculate how long this has been here, and therefore how widespread it is and whether it’s possible to eradicate it,” Prewett said. “We also know that eradicating this disease when you’ve got a lot of psyllids around is extremely difficult to do.”

Texas has had HLB-spreading psyllids for several years. Florida also had the psyllids for several years before HLB was confirmed in 2005, and agriculture officials quickly concluded that eradication was not feasible.

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