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Kansas Insect Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants, and Extension Personnel

Department of Entomology
239 West Waters Hall
K-State Research and Extension
Manhattan, KS 66506-4027

Tel: 785-532-5891

Fax: 785-532-6258



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NO RECOMMENDED OR PROVEN METHOD FOR CONTROL OF ITCH MITES YET:

In a recent newsletter (5/26/06), we advised homeowners that the hairy areas in the underside of oak leaves were not structures associated with the oak gall itch mites that have plagued Midwesterners during the summers of 2004-05. These mites develop by preying on the larvae of minute midges which are responsible for the formation of the marginal leaf roll galls of oaks. Although these galls appear to be closed tightly, the tiny mites (1/125 inch) can enter the galls through small openings and attack the midge larvae. Each reproducing female mite produces about 250 fully-developed females which disperse with the wind. Thus, humans and pets serve as accidental hosts.

Because of the itching and painful bites inflicted by these mites, homeowners are eager to learn of ways to control them. Unfortunately, there is no proven or recommended method for their control. Research conducted in Lincoln, Neb. by entomologists from the University of Nebraska and K-State is testing various insecticides aimed to kill the adult midges before or during emergence from the lawn habitat in the spring to prevent them from flying to the host oak trees. Results have been encouraging and this information should be available later in the summer. **HOWEVER**, this method would only be for spring application.

In addition, K-state horticulturists and entomologists have teamed up in evaluating a method to treat oak trees and kill the midge larvae in the galls, which would result in the death of the mites by depriving them of their necessary host. Treatments were applied several weeks ago, but results will not be available until early August when mite presence is usually observed in the oak galls.

Of current concern are continued reports from homeowners of some tree service personnel promoting systemic insecticide implants to control the itch mites. And, some of this activity is occurring in areas that have not had a serious mite population in the last two years. The bottom line is that there is no information

yet available on an effective method to control these mites. But we hope to have something to recommend in early August.

In the meantime, homeowners should not be concerned about overall tree health: Neither the midge larvae nor the itch mites pose a threat to overall tree health and vigor.

Alberto B. Broce

Weekly Report from the Kansas State University Insect Diagnostic Laboratory:

The following samples were submitted to the Insect Diagnostic Laboratory from June 9, through June 14, 2006:

- 6-9-2006, Pratt County: Water Fleas in city lagoon.
- 6-9-2006, Stafford County: Scarab Beetles biting people, horses.
- 6-9-2006, Rice County: Robber Fly larva from soil.
- 6-12-2006, Barton County: Wheat Head Armyworm on wheat grain.
- 6-12-2006, McPherson County: Pubescent Leaf Kermes on Bur Oak.
- 6-12-2006, Labette County: Phylloxeran Galls on Pecan.
- 6-14-2006, Bourbon County: House Centipede from home.
- 6-14-2006, Bourbon County: Woolly Alder Aphid on Maple.
- 6-14-2006, Chase County: Sweat Bees biting people.

If there are any questions regarding these samples or about the identification of any arthropod please contact the Insect Diagnostician at 785-532-4739 or at bbrown@ksu.edu .

Bobby Brown

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Sincerely,

Alberto Broce
Livestock Entomologist

Bobby Brown
Entomology Diagnostician