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EFFECT OF FUNGICIDE SPRAYING ON PINK DISEASE INCIDENCE IN *HEVEA BRASILIENSIS*

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An attempt was made to evaluate the effect of fungicide sprays to trunk and branches of *Hevea brasiliensis* on incidence of pink disease caused by *Corticium salmonicolor*. Two rounds of spraying, with a knapsac sprayer with specially designed spray lance, the first in May before monsoon and next in August/September, were compared with prophylactic and curative treatments with Bordeaux paste. During second and third year of plant growth, the disease incidence could be reduced when ammoniacal copper or Bordeaux mixture was sprayed. The percentage reduction in disease incidence was 40.4 and 35.4 for the treatments respectively when compared to curative Bordeaux paste application. Spraying of fungicides using modified mist blower during fourth year of growth proved to be difficult and ineffective. The economics of fungicide spraying and advantages in labour utilization are discussed.

Key words : *Corticium salmonicolor*, Fungicide, *Hevea*, Pink disease, Spraying.

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INTRODUCTION

Pink disease caused by *Corticium salmonicolor* has become one of the most menacing hurdles in the development of young rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*) plants in the traditional rubber growing tracts of India. The rapid rate of replanting using high yielding clones of *H. brasiliensis* has aggravated pink disease incidence due to the highly susceptible nature of these clones. Timely treatment of pink disease, particularly in large plantations, have become difficult due to shortage of labour. Interference of rains during the disease season also delays the treatment. Although therapeutic treatment of pink disease has been practiced for long (Ramakrishnan and Pillay, 1962), the disease could not be fully contained in conducive areas. Prophylactic Bordeaux paste application was suggested as an alternative (Thankamma *et al.*, 1994). In Malaysia, curative spraying of disease affected trees with fungicides has been in practice (Hilton, 1958; Radziah *et al.*, 1992). Although spraying was an easier and faster method, repeated application was required for effective disease control (Wastie and Yeoh, 1972; Yeoh and Tan, 1974). In India, prophylactic painting of the forks of all trees with Bordeaux mixture was recommended (Anstead, 1914) but did not gain much popularity. Spraying of the fork and trunk of trees during prophylactic spraying against abnormal leaf fall disease was a standard practice (Ramakrishnan and Pillay, 1962). This practice was later discontinued in most plantations as brush on curative treatment became popular. One of the reasons for the increase in pink disease incidence could be this change in estate practice. The present study was undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of fungicide sprays in controlling