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Controll of eelworm diseases of bananas in Western Australia: a review

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CONTROL OF EELWORM DISEASES OF BANANAS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

By OLGA M. GOSS, B.Sc., Hons., Plant Pathologist, and M. G. HAWSON, B.Sc. Agric., D.T.A. (Trin.), Tropical Adviser

During the 1950's, a decline in bananas in plantations in Carnarvon, caused by heavy infestations of eelworms, prompted investigations into eelworm control. The work was started in 1955. The results and recommendations based on experiments have been published in Department of Agriculture Bulletin 3532.

In soil fumigation experiments the use of DBCP led to increases in growth and yield and the banana stands survived longer. At Carnarvon bananas are flood irrigated, so metering DBCP into the irrigation water is a relatively easy method of ensuring even distribution of the fumigant.

When planting on new or fumigated areas the planting material must not be infested with eelworm. In corm treatment experiments the most satisfactory treatment was to clean the planting pieces and then dip them in either hot water or DBCP. Treated corms produced better growth and good clean root systems compared with untreated corms.

Trials on the Research Station showed it was possible to maintain plantings of bananas almost free of eelworms by using pre-plant fumigation methods, DBCP treatment of corms and subsequent annual DBCP fumigation.

Plantation owners have found that fumigation pays. Since the experiments started in 1955 the results have been so convincing that now 98 per cent. of the owners are using fumigation regularly. The resulting increases in yield are worth about ten times the cost of the fumigant.

Banana root infested with root-knot eelworm (Meloidogyne javanica). Note large galls on roots, and rotting back of fine feeder roots

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