Pasmo of linseed and flax

S C. Chambers
PASMO OF LINSEED AND FLAX

By S. C. CHAMBERS, M.Sc, Plant Pathologist

Pasmo is a foliage disease which may cause severe damage to plantings of linseed and flax approaching maturity. The disease is favoured by warm humid conditions and is especially destructive when crops have lodged extensively as a result of storms.

PASMO disease was first recorded in Western Australia in 1945, when it was found on introduced flax at Avondale Research Station, Beverley. The outbreak was not serious and the affected plants were destroyed to prevent any spread of the disease.

The disease was not detected again until 1957, when traces were found on flax experimental plots at Boyup Brook. Since then it has been recorded on commercial planting of linseed in the southern cereal areas of Mt. Barker and Esperance.

As the disease progresses the affected leaves dry up and fall to the ground. The spots on the stems enlarge, join together and sometimes completely encircle it (Fig. 1). The entire plant finally turns dark brown and ripens prematurely.

Symptoms

Pasmo is caused by the fungus *Sphaerella linorum*.

It is usually first seen as small, roughly circular spots on the lower leaves. Spots are also formed on the lower parts of the stem, but these tend to be more elongated than those on the leaves.

Gradually the disease spreads to the younger foliage and also to the floral parts. The older spots become dark brown and develop a speckled appearance due to the formation of numerous minute fungal bodies (pycnidia).

Spread and Carry-over

The disease is spread by fungal seeds (spores) which ooze out of ripe pycnidia in abundance during wet weather. The spores may be splashed by rain onto nearby plants or may be wind borne, and infect the foliage of neighbouring crops.

Pasmo may survive from season to season as spores or fungal threads (mycelium) on infected linseed stubble and flax leaf refuse. It may also be carried over and introduced into new areas by infected seed or diseased plant debris in unclean seed samples.
Control

Losses from pasmo may be minimised by the following measures:—

(1) Dry pickle the seed with chloranil* or an organic mercury dust, at the rate of 2 oz. per bushel.

*Chloranil is available under the trade names of "Coversan," "Tetroc," etc.

(2) Burn or plough-in diseased stubble at the earliest opportunity. This will reduce the sources of infection for the next season.

(3) Do not plant linseed or flax on or near areas which grew an infected crop during the previous season.

Fig. 1.—Linseed stems showing complete girdling by the Pasmo disease. Note the speckled appearance of the blotches on the stem (right) due to the formation of pycnidia.
Plan Ahead to Stay Ahead of Old Father Time — check today! Make sure your McCormick International hay or harvest machines are in first-class condition ahead of the season. You’ll bale more tons of hay or harvest more bushels of grain per acre and reduce the possibility of field delays, too! Get new machine efficiency — replace all worn or broken parts now. Don’t delay — order hay and harvest parts today.

Your local International Harvester dealer can supply all the parts and any service you need. Plan Ahead to Stay Ahead — see him today!

Please mention the "Journal of Agriculture of W.A.," when writing to advertisers
It's easier to pay by CHEQUE

THOUSANDS/DO YOU?

If, like so many West Australians from every walk of life, you already have an R. & I. Cheque Account, then you know how safe, simple and convenient it is to pay by cheque.

If you do not have an R. & I. Cheque Account, there is a friendly fellow in every branch of the R. & I. just waiting to meet you and explain the advantages of an R. & I. Cheque Account.—And, it costs less than you think. Ask us!

THE RURAL & INDUSTRIES BANK OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA