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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.

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.](image-url)
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