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A NEW HOST FOR PEARL MILLET ERGOT IN RAJASTHAN

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Ergot of pearl millet (*Pennisetum glaucum* (L.) R. Br.) caused by *Claviceps fusiformis* Loveless is an important disease particularly on F_1 hybrids in India. The author during August 1984 observed honey-dew like growth on ears of *Cenchrus setigerus* Vahl. (common name Marwar Dhaman) and *Cenchrus ciliaris* I (common name Marwar Anjan) and later on the pearl millet hybrid BJ-104 at Sumerpur and Pali in Rajasthan. On microscopic examination, the honey-dew revealed presence of conidia of pearl millet ergot pathogen IMI No. 291035 and 291036) prompting further investigations whether these grasses commonly growing around pearl millet fields could serve as collateral hosts for ergot disease on pearl millet in nature.

To prove the pathogenicity, ten earheads of the plants of cv. BJ 104 were dip inoculated at stigma bifid stage with aqueous conidial suspensions prepared separately from honey-dew of above mentioned grasses. Ten earheads well dipped in sterile water (control) only. The inoculaed as well as control earheads were bagged immediately with butter paper bags to exclude possibility of any contamination. After 15-20 days, the inoculated earheads revealed development of honey dew whereas earheads under control remained ergot free.

C. setigerus has already been reported as a host for pearl millet ergot by Ramakrishnan (1952) and present observations further support the possibility of some earlier reported grasses like *Pennisetum squamulatum* Fresen., *P. massaicum* Stapf. from Tamil Nadu by Reddy et al. (1969), *Panicum antidotale* Retz. from Haryana by Thakur and Kanwar (1978) and *Cenchrus ciliaris* L. from Rajasthan by Singh et al. (1983) serving as collateral hosts and as such eradication thereof from around pearl millet fields might help reduce the disease.

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