

Short Communication

Incidence of *Elasmolomus sordidus* Fabricius (Lygaeidae: Hemiptera) on Pearl Millet in Arid Rajasthan

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Lygaeid bugs are generally polyphagous, but exhibit certain level of preference for their food plants. In arid regions of Rajasthan, *Spilostethus pandurus* is a very common but relatively less fastidious species feeding on foliage of diverse vegetation in many families such as Cucurbitaceae, Combretaceae, and Compositae. Other lygaeid bugs primarily occur as seed bugs. *Oxycaraenus laetus* bugs prefer plants of Malvaceae (cotton, okra and hollyhock), but are reported to infest pearl millet also (Verma, 1980).

For the last three decades, another commonly occurring lygaeid, *Elasmolomus sordidus* seemed to be almost confined to sesame. Although Sharma *et al.* (1990) reported its occurrence on sesame in Jabalpur (Madhya Pradesh) only in 1990, it is an established pest of sesame, many African and Asian countries including India. Hassan (1995) regarded this seed bug as a growing serious pest problem considerably limiting the production of sesame in Sudan. In Bangladesh, it occurs abundantly (during February) on groundnuts (Islam *et al.*, 1983) and soybean (Ali, 1988). In South India, *E. sordidus* is known to occur as a seed bug also on millets and groundnut (Nair, 1976) and Thangavelu (1985) observed it to feed upon and carry the seeds of *Capsicum annum* to considerable distance, as is known in the case of sesame. Mukhopadhyay and Saha (1995) reported the bug to thrive well on groundnut, wheat and *Ficus religiosa*, a non-economic host. Fourth instar larvae showed the highest consumption and weight gain on groundnut seeds

aestivation under the sesame or other straw, cracks and cool shelters.

E. sordidus was observed to occur as a pest on many lines of pearl millet breeding material under and condition during kharif 2003. Besides having settled on ears, nymphs and adults stayed gregariously in good numbers (9-20) in the leaf sheath and under leaves. The number of bugs plant⁻¹ was >20 and up to 45 in some cases. A high number of nymphs and their sedentary occurrence, along with adults, indicated its active breeding of the bug on pearl millet. However, oviposition on pearl millet plants could not be confirmed in field observations. Field occurrence and feeding of *Elasmolomus sordidus* on pearl millet foliage appears to be a new record from this region.

References

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In arid regions of Rajasthan, *Elasmolomus sordidus* gets carried to threshing floors with harvested crops of sesame and pearl millet. Adults are seen feeding on threshed as well as sesame seeds. Population of the bug is known to decrease during summer months and the bug undergoes

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