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**PROTECTION OF TEA FROM BLACK BLIGHT DISEASE IN THE
LOW COUNTRY**
(*Rizoctonia solani*)

(This circular cancels the Advisory Circular No. D4, Serial No.15/72)

1. Introduction

The Black Blight leaf disease is caused by the fungus *Rizoctonia solani* and observed in heavily shaded nursery beds and young tea plants in new clearings (including infilled blocks), under exceptionally high and continuous rainfall conditions, usually during the periods of May to July, and October to December, in the low-country districts. This disease is confined to elevations less than 600 m (2000 ft) amsl.

2. Symptoms and Diagnosis

Irregular black spots appear on leaves especially on those near the soil. These spots first appear near the base of the leaf spreading along the mid-rib, and progress until a greater part of the lamina becomes necrotic. The leaf then dies completely and gets detached from the stem at the petiole. But many affected leaves do not drop and stay attached by means of the cobweb-like mycelium of the fungus that spreads all along the stem. In severe situations of the disease, which can happen under continuous rainfall conditions, it may lead to stem infections with the resultant dieback of young VP plants.

3. Disease Control

In heavily shaded nurseries, the shade should be thinned out during periods of exceptionally high and continuous rainfall. With the first appearance of widespread leaf spotting, drench spray the plants with a 50% (w/w) copper fungicide at a dilution of 25 g in 10 l of (4 oz in 10 gallons) of water, using knapsack sprayers. If the rain continues, a second spraying should be undertaken after a fortnight.

In new clearings, spraying should be done only when the severe expression of the disease *i.e.* stem infection, is noticed. To achieve a drenching spray of the plants and also to wet the soil immediately beneath the plant, about 450 – 500 l of the solution would be required to cover one hectare (45 gallons per acre). It is not economical to spray large extents if only the leaf spotting is noticed.

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