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MANAGEMENT OF TEA TORTRIX (*Homona coffearia* Neitner)

(This Advisory Circular cancels Circular Nos. I 5A, I 5B and I 10, with Serial Nos. 9/94, 10/94 and 1/90 respectively)

1. Introduction

Tea Tortrix is generally a dry-weather pest. However, sporadic outbreaks may occur at other times. The life cycle of Tea Tortrix is about 7 to 8 weeks in the up-country districts (elevation above 1200 m), and 5 to 6 weeks at elevations around 600 m.

1.1 Pattern of outbreaks

	South-West sector	North-East sector
Major outbreaks	Begin around December, and may continue up to about May	Begin around May/June, and continue until about August or September.
Peak periods	February	August

With the onset of dry weather (and also during dry weather spells at other times), tea fields, especially those in the first and second year from prune, must be carefully examined for any signs of Tortrix outbreaks.

Tortrix may come in outbreak proportions even during non-season times, like rainy periods, when for some reason the efficiency of natural control agents has come down.

1.2 Natural control

The pest is effectively brought under control by natural mortality factors, the most important of which include larval parasitism by *Macrocentrus homonae* or protozoan, bacterial and viral outbreaks which are prevalent during wet weather.

Tea Tortrix seems to be the only suitable host for *Macrocentrus homonae*, whose populations fluctuate with fluctuations in populations of Tea Tortrix.

2. Population monitoring and sampling

Monitoring a pest population is the first step in developing a proper Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programme. Population monitoring can be used to assess the build-up and spread of a Tea Tortrix infestation.

2.1 Surveillance at the beginning of the 'Tortrix season'**2.1.1 Visual signs**

The tiny larvae begin their life in a nest formed either at the tip of the first leaf or by spinning together the unopened bud and the first leaf. Tea pluckers can be trained to identify these signs.

If proper vigilance is maintained, and if pockets of infestation are observed at the early stages, it may only be necessary to carry out spot-spraying. Areas as small as one acre could be selected for