Banana flower thrips

Thrips hawaiiensis

(Monitoring and control options)

Monitoring

If flower thrips damage is being picked up in the packing shed, the best solution would be to speak to your bell injectors, revise training and ensure that bell injections are being performed correctly (right time and right position).

Flower thrips damage is easy to find in the shed, but it is also possible to find it out in the field. Monitoring for early detection of flower thrips can be done by examining bells of bunched plants every time you're in the paddock. When large numbers of flower thrips are present, they cause bract feeding patterns which are 'lace-like' in appearance and are lighter than the mauve bracts (Figure 1). These are more pronounced at trimming (when flower thrips populations are highest). Although bunches may already have damage, it gives you an early indication of high pest pressure allowing you to revise training with bell injectors, approximately 12 weeks earlier if assessing damage postharvest in the shed.

Figure 1 Bract feeding from banana flower thrips

Control options

Biological

A range of predatory bugs, predatory mites, ladybird beetles and lacewings can assist in reducing the build-up of flower thrips (Figure 2). Choosing chemical products that are less likely to kill these beneficial insects may assist in suppressing background pest populations.

Figure 2 Predatory bugs which reduce banana flower thrips populations; green lacewing left, brown lacewing middle, spotted ladybird right.

This information is adapted from: Pinese, B., Piper, R 1994, *Bananas insect and mite management*, Department of Primary Industries Queensland

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Control options continued

Chemical

Chemical control is best achieved with correct bell injection. Flower thrips can make their way between the bracts into the bell and damage very young fruit before bell injection. Therefore, to limit the extent of this damage, the timeliness of bell injection is important. Inject bells whilst still upright (Figure 3). Increase the frequency of bell injecting during warmer months to account for increased plant growth (if possible, as short as every 4-5 days and extending out to every 7 days in winter).

Always check the APVMA website for current chemical registrations before use. Below are insecticides currently registered (March 2023) and permitted for bell injection to control flower thrips in banana.

Figure 3 For maximum coverage bell inject in the upright position.

*Table 1: Pesticides currently registered for bell injection for control of Banana flower thrips (Thrips hawaiiensis) in banana crops. Pesticides listed from soft to hard options in terms of the effect on other beneficial insects, based on the Cotton Pest Management Guide 2022-23. Options are correct as of **March 2023**, see specific product labels and the APVMA portal for details.*

Active Ingredient	Chemical group	Trade Name*	Activity
Spinetoram (APVMA Permit PER87198)	5	Success®Neo	Contact & ingestion
Acephate	1B	Orthene®	Contact
Bifenthrin	3A	Talstar®80SC	Contact

Impacts on beneficials: Very Low Low Medium High Very High

*: Trade names are used as an example only, other products may exist, and one name is chosen for simplicity and space.

For specific details always read the label or check online on the APVMA website

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