

# Spider mites

## *Tetranychus lambi* and *Tetranychus urticae* (Life cycle and behaviour)

### Life cycle and behaviour

Both the banana spider mite (*Tetranychus lambi*) and the two-spotted mite (*Tetranychus urticae*) are often simply referred to as 'spider mites'.

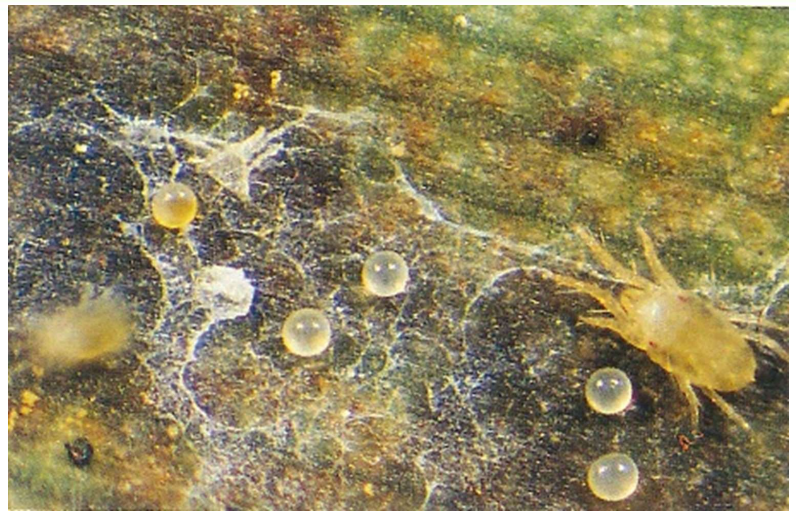
The life cycle and appearance of the banana spider mite and the two-spotted mite are similar. Both mites are typically found on the underside of leaves, only being present on the top side in very high infestations. The main distinguishing feature between the two types of mites is that high populations of the two-spotted mite are always associated with webbing (similar to spiders). Webbing occurs typically on the underside of the midrib or in severe infestations, down the leaf veins. The two-spotted mite is more commonly found on bananas in South-East Queensland and northern NSW. By comparison, the banana spider mite predominantly is in Far North Queensland and is also identifiable as it is more straw coloured and lacks spots.

The straw-coloured or greenish adult banana spider mites are usually less than 0.5mm in length and are best seen with the aid of a magnified (10X) hand lens.

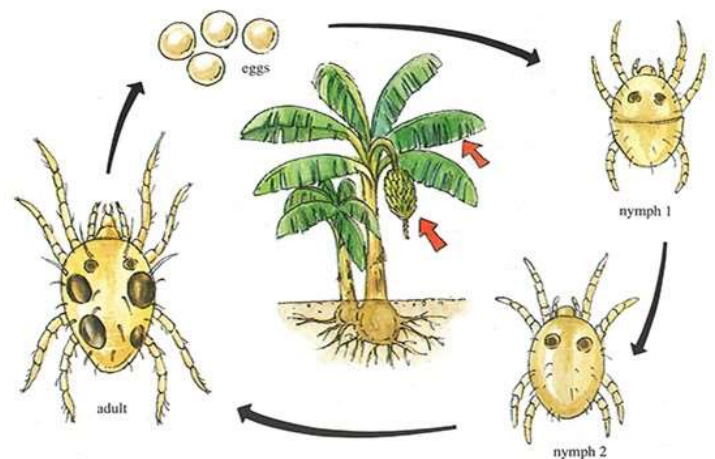
The very small transparent to yellow, spherical eggs are laid singly on the leaf surface and, upon hatching, pass through two nymphal stages before becoming adults. In hot conditions, the life cycle can be as short as seven to ten days.

By comparison, the adult female of the two-spotted mite (*T. urticae*) lives two to four weeks and can lay several hundred eggs during her life. They can build populations rapidly if conditions are favourable.

Spider mites mainly use wind and small spun lines of web to migrate. Mites also can move by walking short distances between plants.



**Figure 1** Adult spider mite and its spherical eggs. Note the dark leaf tissue, an indication of dead leaf cells caused by mite feeding.



**Figure 2** Life cycle of the mite (red arrow indicates parts of the plant affected)

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