

POKKAH BOENG



INTRODUCTION

This fungus disease is found in all sugarcane growing regions, and generally occurs from late spring to the end of summer. It normally appears during periods of hot humid conditions when the cane is growing rapidly. It generally is only a minor disease of sugarcane in Australia, but can cause major damage in some areas overseas.

Pokkah boeng appears more often in some varieties than others. It is caused by a wind-borne fungus which settles in the growing spindle of the cane plant.

CAUSAL AGENT

Pokkah boeng is found worldwide and is caused by members of the *Fusarium fujikuroi* species complex (FFSC). It is an air-borne fungal disease which occurs in all canegrowing districts in Australia. The unusual name, pokkah boeng, is derived from a Javanese term meaning a malformed or distorted top.

SYMPTOMS

The general characteristics of pokkah boeng are a distortion and shortening of the top and leaves, yellowing (chlorosis) at the base of young leaves and ladder-like longitudinal breaks in the rind. Under field conditions, pokkah boeng may develop many variations from the general symptoms, but the final result is usually a malformed, twisted top or damaged stalks. Occasionally the growing point is killed, but generally the new top grows away quite normally and continues to make cane. In severe cases, and in some varieties, the stalks of mature cane affected by pokkah boeng will have a knife-like cut into the side which may cause them to snap off. In these cases yield losses can occur.

MANAGEMENT

Direct control of this disease is usually not required because the cane usually recovers with minimal yield loss. Some varieties are more resistant than others, but all commercial varieties have sufficient resistance to avoid significant yield loss in most situations.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information please contact your local adviser.

NOTE

Pokkah boeng differs from Fiji leaf gall as it does not cause any galls on the leaf. Cane generally recovers from pokkah boeng.

(Top) Severe pokka boeng infection of stalk.

(Bottom) Sugarcane top showing leaf distortion caused by pokka boeng.