

Officials chalk out plans to tackle pest infection

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MANGALURU: Officials and scientists from Karnataka and Kerala came together at CPCRI, Kasargod, to chalk out an action plan for management of coconut black-headed leaf eating caterpillar outbreak in parts of DK and Kasargod districts. A sporadic outbreak of black-headed caterpillar *Opisina arenosella* (Walker on coconut) in Thokkottu-Ullal on the outskirts of the city has been noticed for the last few months. The infested coconut palms are seen on both sides of NH from Ullal to Thokkottu.

Preliminary survey conducted by CPCRI has revealed that more than 2,000 coconut palms are infested. The larvae extensively feed on chlorophyll of the leaves, leaving behind the galleries with fecal matter. The leaves of the affected trees completely dry up. As pest population shoots up during summer and dry weather, there is every chance of further spread of this pest if proper management strategies are not implemented at this stage, CPCRI noted.

Recognizing the need to curtail damage due to this pest, P Chowdappa, director, CPCRI, convened a meeting of deputy director, department of horticulture, DK, programme coordinator, Krishi Vignan Kendra, Mangaluru, department of agriculture, Kasargod, and KVK, Kasargod. Chandrika Mohan, principal scientist, CPCRI explained about the biological control developed for this pest. Biological control is highly successful in its control and it has been demonstrated earlier.