



THE BIOLOGY AND ECOLOGY OF
CALIFORNIA RED SCALE, Aonidiella aurantii (Mask.)
(Hemiptera:Diaspididae), AND ITS NATURAL ENEMY,
Aphytis melinus DeBach (Hymenoptera:Aphelinidae).

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page.
SUMMARY	I
DECLARATION	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IV
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES	1
1.1. <u>Aonidiella aurantii</u> (Mask.)	1
1.2. <u>Aphytis melinus</u> DeBach	2
1.3. Studies of Red Scale and its <u>Aphytis</u> Parasites	2
1.4. Studies on Red Scale and its Parasites in Australia	4
CHAPTER 2. RECORDING EXTREMES OF TEMPERATURES IN THE ORCHARD	10
2.1. In Winter	11
2.1.1. Method	11
2.1.2. Results	11
2.2. In Summer and Autumn	13
2.3. Discussion	15
CHAPTER 3. CULTURE OF EXPERIMENTAL INSECTS AND SPECIAL EQUIPMENT	19
3.1. California Red Scale	19
3.1.1. Culture of red scale	19
3.1.2. Mortality of red scale due to the method of transferring	22
3.1.2.1. Introduction	22
3.1.2.2. Experiment 1	22
3.1.2.3. Experiment 2	28
3.2. Mass Culture of <u>A. melinus</u>	28
3.2.1. Collection of one-day-old <u>Aphytis</u> wasps	32
3.3. Special Equipment	33
3.3.1. Collection tube for wasps of <u>A. melinus</u>	33
3.3.2. Constant humidity cage	33
3.3.3. Citrus fruit cage	33
3.3.4. Head lens	33
3.3.5. Microscope	37
3.3.6. Photographic equipment	40
CHAPTER 4. INFLUENCE OF TEMPERATURE ON THE BIOLOGY OF CALIFORNIA RED SCALE	44
4.1. Introduction	44
4.2. Mortality of Red Scale Cohorts on Trees	44
4.2.1. Introduction	44
4.2.1. Methods and materials	45
4.2.1.1. Starting experimental cohorts of red scales	45
4.2.1.2. Use of a photographic method to observe the survival and growth of red scale	47
4.2.1.3. Ambient temperature during the year	47

4.2.2	Results	
4.2.2.1	The survival-rate of adult scales	
4.2.2.2	The relationship between HD > 10°C and survival of adult red scales	
4.2.2.3	The relationship between H.D. > 40°C and the survival of 1st instar scales	
4.2.2.4	The drop-off rate of dead 1st instar scales	
	(i) Introduction	
	(ii) Methods	
	(iii) Results	
	(iv) Discussion	
4.2.2.5	The drop-off rate of dead scales of other stages.	
4.2.3	General discussion	
4.3.	Mortality of Red Scale and the Durations of Temperatures	80
4.3.1.	Mortality of red scale	80
4.3.1.1.	Methods and materials	80
4.3.1.2.	Results	80
4.3.2.	Reproduction of treated adult female scales	83
4.3.2.1.	Methods	85
4.3.2.2.	Results	87
4.4.	Mortality of Red Scale in the Sun	87
4.4.1.	Experiment 1: Measurement of mortality on the tree	87
4.4.1.1.	Methods and Materials	89
4.4.1.2.	Results and discussion	90
4.4.2.	Experiment 2: Mortality on lemons in the sun but off the tree	96
4.4.2.1.	Methods and materials	97
4.4.2.2.	Results and discussion	97
4.5.	Mortality of Cohorts of Red Scale Responding to Low Temperature	99
4.5.1.	Introduction	99
4.5.2.	Methods and materials	99
4.5.3.	Results and discussion	101
CHAPTER 5. BIOLOGY AND ECOLOGY OF <u>Aphytis melinus</u> DeBach		106
5.1.	Host-Feeding of Female Adult of <u>A. melinus</u>	106
5.1.1.	Experiments and results	107
5.1.2.	Discussion	127
5.2.	Longevity of Female Adults of <u>A. melinus</u>	129
5.2.1.	Part 1: Laboratory experiments: Longevity of <u>A. melinus</u> wasps on different foods at constant temperatures	129
5.2.2.	Part 2: Field experiments: Test of longevity of female adults of <u>A. melinus</u> on orange on the tree	136
5.3.	Influence of Duration of High Temperature on Mortality of <u>A. melinus</u> Pupa	142
5.3.1.	Methods and materials	142
5.3.2.	Results and discussion	144
5.4.	Searching Efficiency of Female Wasps of <u>A. melinus</u> in Cages at 25°C and 60% R.H.	146
5.4.1.	Review and design of the present experiment	146
5.4.1.1.	Introduction	146
5.4.1.2.	What is "searching efficiency" ?	147
5.4.1.3.	Design of the present experiment	150

51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75
76
77
78
79
80

	Page.
5.4.2. Methods and materials	150
5.4.2.1. Treatments	150
5.4.2.2. Materials	150
5.4.3. Experiments	152
5.4.4. Results and discussion	154
5.4.4.1. General results	154
5.4.4.2. One female wasp	154
5.4.4.3. Interaction among parasites	161
5.4.4.4. Variation among densities of host scales and replications in each experiment	161
5.5. Development of <u>A. melinus</u> at Constant Temperature of 25°C and Constant 75% R.H.	164
5.5.1. Methods and materials	165
5.5.2. Results and discussion	166
CHAPTER 6. GROWTH OF <u>Phacelia</u> sp. AND ITS INFLUENCE ON <u>Aphytis melinus</u> DeBach	175
6.1. Growth of <u>Phacelia</u> sp.	175
6.2. Influence of Nectar on Female Wasps of <u>A. melinus</u>	185
6.2.1. On longevity	185
6.2.2. On searching efficiency of wasps	188
CHAPTER 7. SEASONAL ABUNDANCE OF CALIFORNIA RED SCALE	192
7.1. Introduction	192
7.2. Study Orchard and Sampling Method	194
7.2.1. Study orchard	194
7.2.2. Sampling method	194
7.2.2.1. Distribution of red scale on lemon trees	194
7.2.2.2. Subsampling method	195
7.2.2.3. Results of the sampling experiment	195
7.3. Field Sample of Red Scale	197
7.3.1. Sampling techniques	197
7.3.2. Results and discussion	201
7.3.2.1. Establishment of annual generations of red scale	201
7.3.2.2. The seasonal fluctuation of numbers of red scale	204
7.3.2.3. Growth of the population of red scale	219
7.3.2.3.1. In relation to parasitoid, <u>A. melinus</u>	219
7.3.2.3.2. In relation to daily mean ambient temperature	221
CHAPTER 8. GENERAL DISCUSSION	
8.1. On the Population Regulation of Red Scale	232
8.2. On the Estimation of the Influence of <u>Aphytis</u> on the Natural Control of Red Scale	235
8.3. Control Strategies of <u>Aphytis</u> on Red Scale	238
APPENDIXES	241

SUMMARY

Studies of biology of California red scale, Aonidiella aurantii (Mask.), and its natural enemy, Aphytis melinus DeBach, were conducted at the Waite Agricultural Research Institute (W.A.R.I.), South Australia.

Field and laboratory experiments showed that survival and reproductive ability of female wasps of A. melinus are functions of a carbohydrate source, i.e., honey or flower-nectar. By contrast, host-feeding of female wasps has little effect on survival time and reproductive ability. The host-feeding can cause only little mortality of red scale of growing stages if the wasps have no access to a carbohydrate source.

A patchy population of red scale was constructed to test the searching efficiency of one-day-old female wasps of A. melinus. This population comprised several densities of red scale; different numbers of host citrus fruits were used to maintain the same total number of red scale in each of the densities. Results showed that wasps gave a "frequency response" instead of the classical Holling's functional response: the mortality of red scale was not aggregated in high densities of host scales. The wasps' searching efficiency varied greatly with the availability of carbohydrate.

Field and laboratory experiments tested the influence of extreme temperature on the mortality of red scale. Mortality was influenced not only by the values of the extremes but also by their durations. Similar results were obtained for pupae of A. melinus at 45°C.

Orchard experiments were conducted to measure the temperature 1 mm. above and 5 mm. under the skin of lemons in the sunlight. In summer, scales in the sunlight on lemons could experience a temperature 15°C higher than ambient (in a Stevenson Screen). Also in the orchard, cohorts of red scales were exposed to the sun in summer to measure the effect of extreme temperatures in the sunlight on mortality. The drop-off rate of a cohort in relation to extreme temperatures was also measured. The drop-off rate was not a function of extreme temperatures but a function of the duration after the cohort had been started.

From May 1984 to March 1986, the population dynamics of red scales on lemons were studied in the W.A.R.I. orchard. Samples were taken with an interval of about 95 day-degrees, greater than 12°C. After overwintering, the population of red scale started to grow in early November (mid spring) and stopped in late March (late summer) of the following year. A mathematical analysis indicated a threshold growth of the red scale population occurred at the mean of about 18.5°C for an observation period with 95 day-degrees greater than 12°C. The positive trend of the growth of the population during this period was not reversed by the extremely high temperatures in summer. The daily minima below 8.5°C could cause a significant mortality of red scale (young stages). The parasitoid, A. melinus, showed a poor ability to regulate the population of red scale.

Also detected or measured were (1) the influence of methods of transferring crawlers on the mortality of red scale, (2) the identification of stages of the development of A. melinus at 25°C and 75% R.H., and (3) the growth of Phacelia sp. at constant temperatures.

For field experiments, a special microscope system was constructed.