



Basis for a practical technique for monitoring thrips in avocado orchards

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Abstract Greenhouse thrips *Heliothrips haemorrhoidalis* (Bouché) and red-banded thrips *Selenothrips rubrocinctus* (Giard) (Thripidae) are sporadic but potentially serious pests of avocado fruits in South Africa. A simple monitoring technique for these little-understood pests is described. At low population levels, both thrips showed a distinct preference (93%) to feed between touching fruits, which resulted in damage to 22–33% of the touching fruits in the orchard studied, whereas only 1–3% of the single fruits were damaged. The percentages of touching and single fruits in the orchard were 17.5% and 82.5%, respectively, and it could thus be calculated that 6% of the fruits in the orchard would be unsuitable for export. It is suggested that the fruits be used as 'traps', as this obviates the use of the conventional sticky yellow traps and gives an immediate and more direct assessment of crop loss. It took only 6.5 h to sample 20% of the 180 trees in the study orchard. Using this technique, the individual farmer can decide when chemical control measures are warranted.

Keywords Thrips; *Heliothrips haemorrhoidalis*; *Selenothrips rubrocinctus*; avocados; pest monitoring