

## Six-spotted Mite

*How and when to sample for six-spotted mite:*

Check the underside of fully expanded leaves for patches of purplish discoloration where the side veins branch from the central main vein, or along the main vein. Damage alone is not sufficient to determine whether a spray is needed because it could easily be old damage with no live mites present.

If damage is found, or 6SM are suspected to be there but not yet causing damage, examine the leaves carefully to determine whether or not live 6SM are present. Leaves can be littered with bodies of mites, infertile eggs and other debris. As well harmless tydeid mites can be mistaken for six-spotted mites. To minimise the risk of missing infestations or misidentifying the mites present, use a microscope and not just a hand lens. Remember that immature 6SM pass through resting stages when they will not respond when prodded, but are still alive and should be counted.

No detailed sampling plans or thresholds are yet established for 6SM in New Zealand. Californian experience is that leaf drop is caused by low populations of 6SM, but in New Zealand considerable leaf marking can occur without immediate leaf drop. It would be prudent to be more cautious at times when the trees are stressed, for example at flowering, than when they are growing healthily. Note also that populations of 6SM generally seem to crash naturally in January.

6SM can be patchily distributed in a sample block, and in these circumstances an incipient outbreak would be better detected by a random sampling strategy than one using marked trees.

6SM has been found in numbers from early spring to autumn, with most leaf drop reported in early summer. It is more of a problem in the Far North and Whangarei than in the Bay of Plenty although some damage has been reported from all regions.