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INTRA CLONAL VARIABILITY OF TAXONOMIC CHARACTERS
IN HELICOTYLENCHUS SP.

In most of the soil samples from cultivated plants in West Africa nematodes of the genus Helicotylenchus were found. These had the same general features and in the opinion of the author, belong to the same species.

However, specific determination was impossible because every population was composed of individuals with some characteristics - such as the shape of the tail - which related to the description of different species.

It was supposed that some dimensions and features currently used by various authors in the description of new species of this genus represent only individual variations within the same species. In order to ascertain their taxonomic value the intra clonal variability of those characteristics was studied.

The species being parthenogenetic, it was possible to obtain a clone from a single female inoculation on rice. Fifty females of the progeny were hand picked, fixed and mounted permanently on slides. Twenty characteristics used in the specific descriptions of Helicotylenchus were studied and their variability evaluated. The characters describing the morphology of the tail were found to be very variable and therefore have to be used in taxonomy with the upmost precaution. Other clones of different origin will have to be studied to evaluate precisely the range of morphometric variations within the West African Helicotylenchus species and establish its (or their) true identity. In the process some synonymisations will probably have to be done among members of the genus.

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