Disease name: Napier headsmut disease

Healthy Napier grass with broad leaves and thick strong stems

Napier grass affected by Napier headsmut caused by Ustilago kamerunensis

Description

Healthy Napier grass has strong stems and has many leaves but Napier grass plants affected by headsmut have thin, small leaves and stems and do not seem to grow. The productivity is drastically reduced and the plant seems stunted. Affected plants do not grow even when manure is added and moisture is available.

Symptoms

- Stems became thinner and shorter (look like grass stems)
- The size of the leaves is reduced
- Affected plants produce a head (like a maize tassel or sorghum head).
- The head is covered by soot like material. The black material is the spores (seeds) of the fungus causing the disease.
- Re-growth of affected plants is slow
- In the early stages only a few plants will be showing symptoms disease are few but increase fast especially after cutting and mainly during the dry season when plants are stressed.

Only a few stems on a stool might show symptoms but the number increases rapidly especially after cutting (harvesting).
| Control & Prevention | Napier grass is spread when the spores (seeds) of the fungus infect healthy plant.  
- To reduce the amount of spores in the field check your field regularly  
- Any plant showing the symptoms above should be uprooted and burnt  
- Plants with spores (black soot like material) should NOT be feed to livestock  
- Plant resistant varieties – Kakamega I and Kakamega II which are available from KARI Muguga and KARI Ol Joro Orok. |
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| Good Practice | - Apply enough manure on your Napier grass.  
- Harvest (cut) your Napier grass when the plants are 1 metre tall |
| Special Instructions | - Do NOT feed Napier grass with the disease to livestock  
- Only get your planting material from areas free from the disease (please consult your livestock extension officer or the nearest KARI centre)  
- Plant alternative fodder crops like Guatemala grass, Giant Sateria and Giant Panicum |
| Mandate/ referral Centres | KARI Muguga and KARI Ol Joro Orok |
New Agriculturalist on-line – www.new-ag-info/03-2/develop/dev01.html |
Geographic Coverage

Areas affected by Napier headsmut disease

KEY

Napier headsmut disease

Include map of Kenya with counties (use dots to show disease /pest occurrence)