

Determining the distribution of broad mite infestations in the southeast and evaluating biological control options

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Objectives

1. To determine the geographic and seasonal distribution of broad mite (*Polyphagotarsonemus latus*) in blackberries in the southeastern US.
2. To assess the potential of biological control agents to provide season-long broad mite suppression.
3. To collaborate with other broad mite projects in the southeast.

Progress to date

Work on this project was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated constraints on research, hiring, and travel. The requested budget was dedicated to support an hourly worker and for field research. We were unable to recruit a qualified hourly worker with experience working on broad mite. Training a worker for this project requires close contact in the laboratory (to identify and enumerate mites in samples) and travel to field sites far from NCSU.

We have requested and been granted a no cost extension for this project and have developed a plan to achieve our objectives in 2021. Briefly, we request a research exemption for this project through the existing NCSU COVID-19 research management system. We will then recruit and train an hourly worker in compliance with all NCSU and NC safety protocols. We will coordinate with our AR, SC, and VA collaborators to ensure their ability to continue and adjust our efforts based on current regulations and conditions as of April 2021 (when our project will recommence).

We appreciate the opportunity to conduct this work in 2021.