

Response of cultivars of *Eucalyptus urophylla* S. T. Blake to leaf necrosis caused by *Harknessia* sp.²

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Abstract

Commercial production of *Eucalyptus* in Venezuela began two decades ago. Clonally propagated material is used regularly for planting. Leaf necrosis, caused by *Harknessia* sp. was detected in 1999, which might become a threat to *Eucalypt* plantations. To evaluate resistance to the disease in the germplasm, a test was performed on five six-month old elite cultivars, grown in polyethylene bags. Plants were inoculated with a spore suspension, incubated at $26 \pm 3^{\circ}\text{C}$ and 100% RH for 4 days, and then transferred to a shaded place. Incidence of leaf necrosis and defoliation were evaluated at 45 days. Disease severity was registered at 15, 30, 45, 60, and 75 days after inoculation. Significant difference ($P < 0,01$) between cultivars was found for the three variables. No correlation was observed between disease incidence or severity and defoliation. Cultivars SMVEN-213, SMVEN-241, and SMVEN-256 showed less incidence and severity than SMVEN-191 and SMVEN-341. Although resistance to leaf necrosis was detected, all cultivars should be considered in a systematic planting to prevent a severe epidemic.

Key words: *Eucalyptus*, fungus, phenotypic variability

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