

ABSTRACT

Field trials were conducted during 2000-2001 at KARI's Mwea-Tebere and Kiboko farms to establish the effect of onion thrips, *Thrips tabaci* Lindeman on onion bulb yields and to identify the critical onion growth stage for selective protection from the pest infestation. Yield reductions of 59 and 27% were recorded in the first and second crops respectively at Mwea-Tebere, but no significant yield reductions were observed in a third crop grown at Kiboko with low thrips infestation. A significant onion yield response to thrips infestation was observed during the 2nd month after transplanting (bulb-formation) and 3rd month after transplanting (bulb-enlargement), but no significant response was observed during the 1st month (pre-bulbing) and 4th month (maturation stage). Onion protection during bulb-formation and enlargement stages only, resulted in higher marginal returns than full season pesticide application. The studies suggest that control recommendations for onion could be refined to optimize need-based protection.