INTRODUCTION

Mites have emerged as serious pests of rice causing considerable damage, particularly in South India. The rice leaf mite, *Oligonychus oryzae* (Hirst) (Acari: Tetranychidae) and the sheath mite, *Steneotarsonemus spinki* Smiley (Acari: Tarsonemidae) are considered as major mite pests of rice (Laksmi et al., 2008). Among these, the rice leaf mite, *O. oryzae* is the predominant one. It was first reported from South India by Cherian (1931). Later it was reported to damage rice from different regions of India. Large number of different stages of the mite colonize the undersurface of the leaves and desap causing white speckles on the upper surface which eventually turn yellow and dry up. When the mite population increases, they also colonize the upper surface of leaves and cause similar damage. A reduction of yield of up to 25 per cent has been estimated due to the severe infestation of this mite (Misra and Israel, 1968). Sporadic occurrence of leaf mite has been reported recently from rice growing areas of Palakkad, Kerala where intensive cultivation of rice is being practiced (Bhaskar and Thomas, 2011). Now the mite is emerging as a regular pest of rice during post monsoon season in the rice growing tracts of Palakkad district of Kerala (Annual Report, 2013). Hence, there is a need to develop a suitable management strategy against this pest which calls for a thorough understanding of the biology of the pest.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Biology of rice leaf mite, *Oligonychus oryzae* was conducted in the Acarology laboratory, Department of Agricultural Entomology during July-August, 2014 at 27 ± 3°C and 70.2 ± 7 per cent relative humidity, using the rice variety Jyothi. *Oligonychus oryzae* collected from infested rice fields of Nenmara, Palakkad district was mass multiplied in the laboratory on thirty days old rice seedlings raised...