Sticky exudate, sooty mold

Sucking insects including aphids, whitefly, mealybugs (Pseudococcus calceolariae), scale (Diaspidiotus perniciosus)

Damage:

Several types of insects suck from plant phloem, aphids being by far the most common of these in strawberries. Aphids are well hidden under leaves; the white empty skins from moults or the sticky exudate are the first symptoms likely to be noticed, even before their feeding causes leaf distortion and their exudate makes leaves sticky.

Whitefly are rarely a problem outdoors, but are commonly an issue in covered production. They also exude sugar as they feed under leaves, on which sooty mold will grow.

Both aphids and whiteflies are phloem feeders, negatively impacting plant vigor, and potentially vectoring viruses.

Mealybugs (Pseudococcus calceolariae) and scale (Diaspidiotus perniciosus) could feed on strawberry, but in annual production systems are very unusual.

Identification:

Aphids (various species)

Whitefly

San Jose Scale (*Diaspidiotus perniciosus*)

Mealybug (*Pseudococcus calceolariae*)

Insects that suck from the plant vascular system consume more sugars than they need in their search for mineral nutrition. Consequently, they exude the extra sugars, which becomes the substrate for black mold growth. The mold isn't a plant pathogen, but is an indication of feeding by sap sucking insects.

For more information, see the Aphid/Whitefly fact sheet