

PLANT DISEASE AND INSECT ADVISORY



Entomology and Plant Pathology
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127 Noble Research Center
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Vol. 2, No. 23

Website: <http://entopl.okstate.edu/Pddl/advisory.htm>

Dec 22, 2003

Army Cutworms Found in Western Oklahoma Tom A. Royer, Extension Entomologist



Dirk Webb, Extension educator-Agriculture, reported finding small army cutworms in some wheat in Washita County. With the dry weather that we have been experiencing, it is not surprising that they are present. Producers should check their fields for early signs of army cutworm activity.

This insect is unusual, because it is quite tolerant to cold and actively feeds throughout the winter months. Adult moths lay eggs from August through October, usually on bare soil (like a newly prepared field ready for wheat planting). The eggs hatch soon after being deposited, which explains why different sizes of larvae are often seen in a field. Larvae feed throughout the winter growing through 7 molts before they turn into pupae. Most larvae will be gone by late March, pupating in the soil. Adult moths begin emerging in April, and fly northward to the Rocky Mountains to spend the summer.

Often, damage goes unnoticed until spring because the larvae grow slowly through the winter and don't get big enough to cause visible damage until temperatures warm in the spring. Signs of injury to wheat include wheat that is "slow growing" or fails to "green up". Unfortunately, that is also a sign of poor growing conditions due to drought (which cutworms also like), so it really requires examining fields for cutworms. A field can be sampled by stirring or digging the soil to a depth of two inches. Take counts in at least 5 locations within your field. The cutworms will be "greenish grey", and will probably curl up into a tight "C" when disturbed. The suggested treatment threshold is 2-3 cutworms per linear foot of row. Several insecticides are registered for army cutworm control, including Fury, Lorsban, and Warrior.



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