



Pest e-alerts



*Entomology and Plant Pathology, Oklahoma State University
127 Noble Research Center, Stillwater, OK 74078
405.744.5527*

Vol. 9, No. 21

<http://entopl.okstate.edu/Pddl/>

June 1, 2010

Late Flush of Armyworms Generating Concern in Wheat

Tom A. Royer, Extension Entomologist

I have received reports of a late flush of armyworm infestations in parts of the state. Roger Gribble, Area Agronomist and Tom Peeper, “soon-to-be-retired” Professor of Weed Science reported infestations in Garfield and Kingfisher Counties. This is probably as late as I have seen an infestation in Oklahoma. Armyworm infestations generally occur in late April through the first two weeks of May. Obviously, the cooler winter we experiences this year has delayed their development.

Early signs of an infestation include leaves with ragged margins that have been chewed. You may find “frass” i.e. the excrement from armyworm caterpillars, around the base of wheat stems. They also tend to clip sucker heads from developing wheat plants. Fortunately, head clipping is rare in winter wheat. Scout for armyworms, at 5 or more locations looking for “curled up



worms”. Armyworm caterpillars tend to feed at night, so a good strategy is to bring a flashlight and look at fields after dusk when they are feeding up on

the plant stems. The suggested treatment threshold for armyworms is 4-5 unparasitized caterpillars per linear foot of row.



Armyworms have a number of natural enemies that help keep populations in check, if given a chance. In particular, parasitic wasps and flies attack them. If you find small white cocoons littered on the ground that are about $\frac{3}{4}$ the size of a cue tip, the natural enemies have already taken care of the problem.

Because the wheat is close to harvest, producers really need to evaluate if control is necessary. Generally if wheat is past the soft dough stage, control is not warranted unless obvious head clipping can be seen, and caterpillars are still present and feeding. Worms feeding on the awns when plants are past soft dough will not cause enough yield loss to justify the expense of an insecticide application.

Consult [CR-7194 Management of Insect and Mite Pests of Small Grains](#) for information on insecticides registered for control of armyworms.

Dr. Richard Grantham
Director, Plant Disease and Insect Diagnostic Laboratory

Oklahoma State University, in compliance with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 11246 as amended, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other federal laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, religion, disability, or status as a veteran in any of its policies, practices or procedures. This includes but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Robert E. Whitson, Director of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Vice President, Dean, and Director of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural.