



Pest e-alerts



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Corn Earworm in Canola: We Need to Get This Crop in the Bin!

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Fig 1. Corn Earworm on canola. Photo courtesy of Josh Bushong, Oklahoma State University.

I received a picture of a caterpillar from Josh Bushong that was chewing on the canola pods. I identified it as a corn earworm and Josh said there were several fields that were infested.

The corn earworm is known by many names: corn earworm, sorghum headworm, cotton bollworm, tomato fruitworm, soybean podworm. It appears that it wants to add the canola podworm to its extensive list of insect aliases.

The caterpillar comes in varied colors (green, yellow, brown, or pinkish with a darker longitudinal stripe, and full grown larvae reach one inch long. The larva grows through 4-6 instars in 4-6 weeks.

It is very important to check the field before deciding to spray and check several locations in the field to get an accurate assessment of the infestation. Look for damage signs (damaged pods) as well as the caterpillars themselves. We developed a guestimate for a treatment threshold for variegated cutworms, and I assume that the corn earworm is similar in size and appetite to a variegated cutworm. So, I suggest we use 2 or



Fig 2. Corn Earworm (podworm) variations in color. Photo R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, Bugwood.org.

more corn earworms per square foot as a treatment threshold.

The selection of an insecticide should be made both on cost and pre-harvest interval (PHI). Most effective insecticides have a pre-harvest interval of from 7-35 days. If canola is close to harvest, avoid insecticides with a long PHI. Current recommendations for control of corn earworms in canola are listed in page 161 of E-832, "2015 OSU Extension Agents' Handbook of Insect, Plant Disease, and Weed Control" or see [CR-7667, Management of Insect and Mite Pests in Canola](#).

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

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