

WHEAT PRODUCTION NEWSLETTER



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Armyworms on the march!

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Armyworm infestations are being observed in parts of the state. This caterpillar measures 1¼ inches when mature, and has a dark brown to grayish body with two pale yellow-orange bands extending down the back. 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. Armyworm infestations occur more frequently around waterways, areas of lush growth, or areas with lodged plants. These areas should be checked first to determine the size of the infestation.

Yield loss from armyworm feeding can occur in two ways. First, they can feed on the flag leaf and awns which causes physiological yield loss because the grain head won't completely fill. They can also cause direct yield loss by “clipping heads” as plants become mature and lose green tissue. Fortunately, head clipping is rare in winter wheat. According to Kansas State University extension entomologists, barley is much more likely to suffer from head clipping. The head clipping I have noticed over the years is usually restricted to secondary tillers with very small, green heads that would not likely contribute much to yield.

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.



Armyworm photo courtesy of the
University of Illinois



Armyworm moth

To scout for armyworms, select several locations and search the ground and plant material for armyworms in at least five random locations. 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. 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. Parasitized armyworms can often be recognized by the presence of small white eggs attached behind its “neck”. The eggs are about the size of a period on a newspaper.



The suggested treatment threshold for armyworms is 4–5 unparasitized caterpillars per linear foot of row. If control is needed, the following products are registered. Follow all application and pre-harvest restrictions. ***I want to emphasize the PHI because it could cause a producer to have to delay harvest or have the grain not be accepted by the elevator.***

Product	Rate (amount of product/acre)	Grazing/Harvest Waiting Period
Malathion	2 pts	7 days
Lannate LV	0.75 - 1.5 pt	7 days
Mustang Max	1.7 - 4.0 fl oz	14 days
Methyl parathion	1.5 pt	15 days
Pennacp-M	2 -3 pt	15 days
Sevin XLR	1 - 1.5 qt	21 days
Tracer	1.5 - 3 fl oz	21 days
Baythroid 2	1.8 - 2.4 fl oz	30 days
Karate w Zeon	1.28 - 1.92 fl oz	30 days
Proaxis	2.56 - 3.84 fl oz	30 days
Prolex	1.02 - 1.54 fl oz	30 days
Silencer	2.56 - 3.84 fl oz	30 days
Tagia	2.56 - 3.84 fl oz	30 days
Tombstone	2.56 - 3.84 fl oz	30 days
Warrior w Zeon	2.56 - 3.84 fl oz	30 days

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