



CROPS

Armyworms

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Quick Facts...

The armyworm is unable to survive Colorado winters and armyworm moths migrate into Colorado in early summer.

Larvae feed at night and on cloudy days, and hide under crop debris during sunny periods.

Armyworms are characterized by five stripes, three on the back and two on the sides, running the length of the body.

In Colorado, armyworm is mostly a pest of corn and spring grains, with only occasional infestations occurring in winter wheat.

Because of the sporadic and unpredictable nature of armyworm outbreaks, management options are limited to the use of insecticides.

Field Biology

The armyworm is unable to survive Colorado winters. Instead, armyworm moths migrate into Colorado in early summer. They lay their eggs in rows or clusters on the lower leaves of various grass crops. Dense grassy vegetation is preferred for oviposition. Newly hatched larvae move with a looping (inchworm) action. Larvae feed at night and on cloudy days, and hide under crop debris during sunny periods. One or more generation may occur per year.



Mature larvae are about 1.5 inches in length, smooth-bodied, and dark grey to greenish-black in color. They are characterized by five stripes, three on the back and two on the sides, running the length of the body. While the stripes on the back vary in color, the stripes on the sides are pale orange with a white outline. The head capsule is remarkable for its "honeycomb" of black markings.

Host Plants

Armyworm feeding is mostly limited to grasses, although this insect will feed on a number of other plants when starved. In Colorado, armyworm is mostly a pest of corn and spring grains, with only occasional infestations occurring in winter wheat.

Distribution

Armyworm is found east of the Rockies in the United States and Canada and occurs in eastern Colorado and in the San Luis Valley.

Best Management Practices

Armyworm outbreaks only occur occasionally because they have many natural enemies that usually prevent the development of economically significant infestations. Because of the sporadic and unpredictable nature of armyworm outbreaks, management options are limited to insecticides. Scout for armyworm in field margins, low areas with rank growth, or areas of lodged plants. Look for feeding damage, frass (droppings) around base of plant, or plant material that has been around damaged plants and in heads of barley or wheat.

Consider treating armyworm infestations if all of the following conditions are met: larval counts exceed the appropriate level in Table 1; worms are 0.75 to 1.25 inches in length; most larvae are not parasitized (look for white eggs behind

the head or small brown cocoons attached to the body); and leaf feeding or head clipping is evident.

Table 1: Action thresholds for the true armyworm in field corn and small grains.

SITUATION	ACTIONTHRESHOLD
Field corn	Lower 1/3 of leaves consumed before hard dent stage.
Small grains (preheading - defoliation in lower leaves)	5 larvae per square foot
Small grains (head clipping)	2 larvae per square foot