

Partnership Perk



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Western Bean Cutworm Moths Flying Early This Year

Western bean cutworm has only in recent years become a concern in Iowa. The pest problem originally was discovered in west central and northwest Iowa in 2000. Since then, populations have been found across Iowa. Because their activity has been detected earlier than normal this year, experts began recommending that corn growers scout their fields early in July. Here's what some are saying:

Marlin Rice, professor of entomology, Iowa State University: “This year western bean cutworm moths began flying on June 23, which is about two weeks earlier than expected. We’ve advised producers to begin scouting for egg masses when corn plants begin to tassel. The economic threshold is 8 percent of plants with an egg mass. Use a long-residual insecticide before larvae enter the corn ear. Insecticide should be applied 7 to 10 days after the eggs are laid.”

Rich Pope, extension integrated pest management specialist, Iowa State University: “Western bean cutworm is an insect that has only in recent years become a concern in Iowa. Starting in west central/northwest Iowa in around 2000, populations have been found across Iowa. Scouting of corn plants that are nearing the reproductive stage should occur either around the week of peak moth flight, or once around 700 moths have been captured in a local pheromone trap. An economic threshold we suggest is to consider treatment when 8 percent of 100 plants having egg masses (check 20 plants in 5 locations in the field). ISU hosts a website that allows the public to monitor trap data across the western Corn Belt, www.ent.iastate.edu/trap/westernbeancutworm. Damage in the past has been sporadic in and between fields, but as we learn more about how western bean cutworm in Iowa our suggestions for management will become improved.”

James Russmann, agronomy manager, Farm Service Company, Council Bluffs: “Western bean cutworm has been increasing in a south-and-east direction for the last three years. We’ve seen damage range from 1 to 2 bushels an acre up to 30 bushels an acre. When damage occurs, many growers are finding they are subject to a grain quality dock at the elevator. The harvested grain is light and

chaffy. Aerial application is a good practice, if warranted and if the timing is exact. Timing is very critical since control is almost impossible if the worms have entered the developing ears of corn.”

Gary Coates, manager, Agronomic Solutions, Omaha: “Based on moth flight information, we advised scouting for western bean cutworm the first week in July, as some cornfields in southwest Iowa began tasseling. Western bean cutworm egg masses are cream-colored and can be found on both sides of the uppermost leaves of the plant. If you have two or more different hybrids planted in different parts of a field, scout them separately. Herculex and Herculex Xtra hybrids offer control of western bean cutworms. Regular Bt hybrids do not. In the past, growers in southwest Iowa who had infestations reported yield losses up to 20 to 40 bushels per acre.”

Long Story Short: Be scouting now. Be sure to check the moth trap data at Iowa State’s website, www.ent.iastate.edu/trap/westernbeancutworm.