

Cornell University
New York State
Integrated Pest Management Program

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True Armyworm - Second generation found in western and northern New York

Note: The second generation of armyworm has generally not caused significant economic problems in NY. Given the extent of armyworm activity earlier this season, however, it would be prudent to monitor grass and corn fields closely for this pest in the next few weeks...

Reports of true armyworm larvae in grass hay fields came in this week from western, northern (Jefferson and Lewis counties) and eastern (Washington county) NY. Larvae collected were small <1/8 to 1/2 inch long. The larvae are small enough that they are difficult to find by searching through grass looking into the canopy to the ground surface. Better results to determine armyworm presence / absence at this small stage can be obtained if fields are swept using a standard 15" diameter sweep net. True armyworm are nocturnal, so sampling for them in the evening is best, and early morning or very late afternoon will provide higher captures than if sampling is done in the heat of the day. The sweep net technique provides a useful tool to determine presence, however, this technique is a departure from the usual assessment method of determining the average number of larvae per unit area or number per plant *and action guidelines* (see below). Cornell's field crop entomologist, Elson Shields, suggests 2-3 armyworm larvae per sweep may indicate a field at risk.

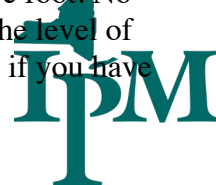
One consideration when making management decisions is to look for presence of natural enemies: Tachinid fly parasites and fungal and viral diseases. During the first armyworm generation infestation there were very few reports of tachinid fly parasites that lay their eggs behind the armyworm larva's head, although several fields with diseased armyworm larvae were found in western NY. Diseased larvae climb to the upper regions of plants before they die. These larvae may appear fuzzy (the fungal disease) or dark and shriveled almost appearing to "melt" (the virus disease). Under the right conditions, these natural enemies are quite effective in reducing larval numbers. See:

http://nysipm.cornell.edu/fieldcrops/tag/pestrpt/pestrpt12/06_15_12.asp#Armyworm.

Sampling for armyworm:

Check grass hays and corn fields for presence of armyworm larvae and signs of feeding. Edges of fields adjacent to grass hay, grassy ditchbanks, field with poor grass weed control, etc. should be monitored. If larvae are found in the field margins, scout the interior of fields to determine extent of activity. Check 5 or more areas within the field and field margins. Consider border spray treatments if warranted. Action Threshold Guidelines for True Armyworm follow:

Grass pastures - Midwestern extension guidelines indicate insecticide treatments are justified when four or more non-parasitized, half-grown or larger larvae are present per square foot. No specific guidelines are available in NY. The need for treatment should be based on the level of damage observed in relation to the expected value of grass harvest. REMEMBER... if you have



a true armyworm infestation in a mixed alfalfa – grass stand, alfalfa and grass BOTH NEED to be on the insecticide LABEL to be a legal application!!! If treatment is necessary, be sure that the insecticide is labeled for true armyworm and the crop. Be careful to consider the pre-harvest interval when making decisions. Spray coverage is very important. Use higher spray volume for better coverage. Read and follow label instructions.

If field monitoring determines armyworm numbers have reached control guidelines, consider, where possible, treating only the infested portion of the field and a 20- to 40-foot border around it. A border 20 to 40 feet wide treated with insecticide will prevent armyworms from invading from an adjacent infested field. Because the larvae are active at night, apply treatments late in the day.

Corn – Penn State extension specialists recommend treating seedling stage corn when 10 percent or more of the seedling corn plants are damaged and larvae are still present. For whorl-stage corn, apply an insecticide only if most plants show damage and about three larvae per plant are found. Tall corn will seldom need to be treated unless the leaves above the ear are also damaged. Note: control can be challenging if caterpillars are greater than one-inch long.



Young true armyworm larvae collected 7.18.12 from grass hay field in Jefferson County NY.