



# Pest e-alerts



---

Entomology and Plant Pathology, Oklahoma State University  
127 Noble Research Center, Stillwater, OK74078  
405.744.5527

---

Vol. 14, No. 19

<http://entopl.okstate.edu/Pddl/>

Apr 29, 2015

---

## Increasing Pea Aphid numbers in Alfalfa

Kelly Seuhs, Assistant Extension Specialist

Phil Mulder, Extension Entomologist and Department Head



We have received several reports from Extension Educators around the state stating that producers are starting to see increasing numbers of pea aphids in their fields and are curious about their options as harvest time nears. It is not uncommon to see increasing numbers before first harvest since many of the insecticides are starting to lose their efficacy two to three weeks after application. The majority of threshold sprays applied in late March to early April are in this time frame or beyond. In many instances, insecticide applications will provide enough residual to last until first harvest; however, if threshold happens early enough in the season the residual effects of the chemical may not last until first harvest prompting management decisions. As with the other alfalfa aphids, pea aphids can be present in alfalfa the entire summer to fall, but

reproduction is dramatically slowed down when temperatures exceed 90° F. Colonies prefer to feed on stems and newly expanding leaves and are more prevalent in early spring when temperatures are cooler and dryer.

At this point, the concern is what can be done before first harvest?

Evaluating plant vigor is often the key to determining the need to treat for this insect. Closely monitor fields during the early part of the season (March, April, and May) during periods of

slow growth. Hopefully the current rains will help to alleviate some of the problem allowing for more growth and dislodging aphids from plants.

Control decisions should be based on maturity of the alfalfa, the size of the aphid population, and the number of natural control agents present. Alfalfa can tolerate low numbers of aphids without much sign of injury due to natural parasitism and crop growth. However, high numbers of aphids can cause yellowing, wilting, and stunting of plants. Fifty pea aphids or more per stem on 10 inch tall alfalfa would be cause for alarm and beneficial insects would be challenged to keep up (We are seeing numbers in the 100+ /stem).

Producers might want to consider early cutting as an option when heavy infestations develop close to harvest time.

If conditions warrant, another insecticide application may be needed. However, data on efficacy of insecticides for pea aphid control indicates that some products may provide effective control of pea aphids even at the lowest recommended rates. Keep in mind the decision to make another application of insecticide must be carefully considered due to harvest restrictions even at the lower rates. For example: Depending on the rate, Lorsban® (Chlorpyrifos) at 8oz/A has a 7 day pre-harvest restriction (PHI) and up to 21 days PHI when applied at 1 pint or more per acre. In addition, Lorsban® can only be applied once per cutting (at any rate).

Producers must look at their own circumstances and determine the best management strategy for their operation.

I also wanted to note, in a previous Pest e-alert we included a table with current year pricing and rates for products for use in alfalfa weevil and aphid control. I failed to include the lower rate of Lorsban in the table as listed above. I apologize for any confusion it may have caused.

---

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

The pesticide information presented in this publication was current with federal and state regulations at the time of printing. The user is responsible for determining that the intended use is consistent with the label of the product being used. Use pesticides safely. Read and follow label directions. The information given herein is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Cooperative Extension Service is implied.

Oklahoma State University, in compliance with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 11246 as amended, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Higher Education Act), the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other federal and state laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, genetic information, sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, or status as a veteran, in any of its policies, practices or procedures. This provision includes, but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services. The Director of Equal Opportunity, 408 Whitehurst, OSU, Stillwater, OK 74078-1035; Phone 405-744-5371; email: [eeo@okstate.edu](mailto:eeo@okstate.edu) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies: Director of Equal Opportunity. Any person (student, faculty, or staff) who believes that discriminatory practices have been engaged in based on gender may discuss his or her concerns and file informal or formal complaints of possible violations of Title IX with OSU's Title IX Coordinator 405-744-9154.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Vice President, Dean, and Director of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.