



Pest e-alerts



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Something Eating Your Wheat? Could be Armyworms OR Grasshoppers!

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We are getting some reports of a chewing insect eating newly emerged wheat. At this time, the culprit could be fall armyworm, but it could also be grasshoppers. The key is to check before making a spray decision. We have already discussed the potential for fall armyworms and grasshoppers in pastures, but I also want to remind producers about their effects on newly emerged wheat.

In wheat, fall armyworms start out as very small caterpillars that are sometimes difficult to see, especially in no-till fields that have lots of residue to “hide” in during the day. The picture below is an example of just how small they can be, so when you scout, you need to look very carefully. The producer took the picture. He originally determined that there were three per row-foot, but when he looked at the picture more closely, he saw 15 tiny worms.





Look very closely for “window paned” leaves and count all sizes of larvae. Examine plants along the field margin as well as in the interior, because they sometimes move in from road ditches and weedy areas. The suggested treatment threshold is 2-3 larvae per linear foot of row in wheat with active feeding.



Photo courtesy of Jim Carter through Wikimedia Commons

Speaking of insects that may move in from road ditches and weedy areas, grasshoppers will also move in to eat the tender vegetation. Winter wheat is more vulnerable to grasshopper damage in the fall, which can result in stand loss. More often than not, damage occurs in the first 50 to 100 feet on the field border as grasshoppers move in from roadside ditches. They will not start out by windowpaning, because they are already fully-grown and very capable of eating all of the leaf area in a newly emerging wheat field. For more information check out EPP-7196, [“Grasshopper Management in Rangeland, Pastures, and Crops”](#).

Numerous insecticides are registered for control, but caterpillars are much more susceptible to control when they are small. We will not get relief from fall armyworms until we get a killing frost, so keep vigilant! As I stated, grasshoppers are most likely to feed in the first 50-100 feet along the field border. Our “normal” thresholds for grasshoppers in pasture suggest that a light infestation of 3-7 per square yard in the field, or 11-20 per square yard in the field margin would justify control.

Many of the insecticides registered for control of fall armyworm include control of grasshoppers. Consult the newly updated OSU Fact Sheets [CR-7194 Management of Insect and Mite Pests of Small Grains](#) for control suggestions.

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