



# Pest e-alerts



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## Armyworms “Invading” Some Grass Pastures.

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Besides the scattered reports that I have received about armyworms infesting wheat, I am also getting some reports of armyworms feeding on pasture grasses. These ARE NOT the fall armyworms that infest grass pastures in late summer. This particular armyworm, sometimes called the “true” armyworm, overwinters in Oklahoma and they lay eggs in early spring. While they go through multiple generations, outbreaks in pastures are somewhat unusual, as armyworms do not survive well once temperatures warm in spring. The cool, wet spring that we have experienced favors their survival.

Armyworm caterpillars range from greenish-brown to almost black, with longitudinal stripes on their body. The adult moth is pale brown with a small white spot near the center of each forewing.



Moths lay eggs in rows, often between the leaf sheath and blade. They are more commonly found in mixed-grass pastures. Armyworms do not particularly “like” bermudagrass, but will switch over and eat bermudagrass once they have cleaned up more preferred grasses such as ryegrass or wheat.

Scouting for caterpillars in pasture is easy. Get a wire coat hanger, bend it into a hoop, place it on the ground, and count all sizes of caterpillars in the hoop. Take samples in several locations, along the field margin as well as in the interior. The coat hanger hoop covers about 2/3 of a square foot, so the threshold in pasture would be reached when you find an average of two or three ½ inch-long larvae per hoop sample (3-4 per square foot). There are two good reasons to control them when they are small (less than ½ inches). One is that they have not yet consumed much grass tissue and two; they are much easier to kill when they are small.



For control guidelines and information on registered insecticides, consult OSU Fact Sheet [CR-7193 Management of Insect Pests in Rangeland and Pasture](#). The publication does not list armyworm specifically, but any insecticide that is effective on fall armyworm will also be equally effective on armyworms.

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