



Pest e-alerts



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Don't Ignore Your Wheat and Canola!

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I have seen a smattering of armyworms attacking wheat as I have attended the OSU wheat variety trials around the state. I also have a “re-memory” of a beautiful canola crop that was attacked by variegated cutworms in 2012.

With the fantastic growing conditions that we have had for our wheat and canola and the relative low insect numbers that we have seen, one might be tempted to think, “I am in the clear!” My advice; DO NOT FALL INTO THAT TRAP! This weather is friendly to armyworm and variegated cutworm survival. Simply check your wheat and canola fields for evidence of armyworm feeding and variegated cutworm feeding.

ARMYWORMS: Armyworm caterpillars measure 1¼ inches when mature, and have a dark brown to grayish body with two pale yellow-orange bands extending down the back.

Armyworm infestations occur more frequently around waterways, areas of lush growth, or areas with lodged plants. Check these areas first to determine the size of the infestation.



If you find leaves with ragged margins that have been chewed and or “frass” i.e. the excrement from armyworm caterpillars, around the base of wheat stems, look for armyworms.

Scout for armyworms, at 5 or more locations looking for “curled up worms”. Armyworm caterpillars tend to feed at night, so a good strategy is to bring a flashlight and look at fields after dusk when they are feeding up on the plant stems. The suggested treatment threshold for armyworms is 4-5 unparasitized caterpillars per linear foot of row.



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VARIEGATED CUTWORMS: The variegated cutworm caterpillar has 4 to 7 diamond shaped white/yellow spots on the top center of their back. They will literally climb up the canola plant and feed on the developing pods, cleaning out the seeds within them and stripping the green material from the raceme. Look for damage signs (damaged pods) as well as the caterpillars themselves.



They prefer to feed at night and hide underneath leaf material and dirt clods during the day.

When disturbed, they curl up.

It is very important to check the field before deciding to spray and check several locations in the field to get an accurate assessment of the infestation. One field might be infested but a neighboring field might be untouched.

I suggest a treatment threshold of 2 or more variegated cutworms per square foot.



For information on insecticide control options consult [Check CR-7194, “Management of Insect and Mite Pests in Small Grains”](#) and [CR-7667, Management of Insect and Mite Pests in Canola](#) for registered insecticides, application rates, and grazing/harvest waiting periods. It can be obtained from any Oklahoma County Extension Office.

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