

7-10-2013

2013 Western Bean Cutworm Scouting Update

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Recommended Citation

Sisson, Adam J.; Jesse, Laura C.H.; and Hodgson, Erin W., "2013 Western Bean Cutworm Scouting Update" (2013). *Integrated Crop Management News*. 44.

<http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cropnews/44>

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2013 Western Bean Cutworm Scouting Update

Abstract

Western bean cutworm (WBC) is a corn pest that has expanded its range across Iowa and toward East Coast states. Before corn tassels, newly emerged WBC larvae move to the whorl and feed on the flag leaf. Once tasseling begins, they move to the green silks. Older larvae feed primarily on the ear tip, but some move outside the ear, chew through the husk and feed on kernels on the side or shank of the ear. Unlike corn earworm, multiple WBC larvae may be found in the same ear. Consuming the developing kernels can cause yield losses. In addition, the damage caused by feeding can allow pathogens to enter the ear and reduce grain quality.

Keywords

Entomology

Disciplines

Agricultural Science | Agriculture | Entomology

descriptions of WBC are outlined in a previous [ICMNews article](#).



Photo 1. Western bean cutworm eggs. Frank Peairs, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org.



Photo 2. Western bean cutworm larvae that have just emerged. Frank Peairs, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org.

For field corn, if 5 to 8 percent of plants have eggs or larvae, an insecticide treatment may be warranted. For sweet corn, the threshold is reduced to 4 percent for the processing market and 1 percent for the fresh market. Alternatively, a newly developed “speed scouting” tool, which incorporates corn price into the threshold and may require examining less plants, was developed by Nebraska and can be downloaded [here](#).

Insecticide application must be timed correctly to reach larvae before they enter the ear. If density thresholds are met, the suggested application timing is 90 to 95 percent tassel emergence, or 70 to 90 percent hatch if tassels have extended.

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This article was published originally on 7/10/2013. The information contained within the article may or may not be up to date depending on when you are accessing the information.

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Last Updated 7/11/2013