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Black Cutworm Monitoring 2014: We Need Your Help!

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Abstract

Black cutworm moths are blown into Iowa with spring storms each year. The moths lay eggs in crop fields and emerging black cutworm larvae cut seedling corn (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). However, black cutworms are sporadic pests and scouting is essential to determine if management is necessary. To make scouting easier, the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program at Iowa State University coordinates an annual monitoring network that uses moth trap captures and temperature data to estimate when farmers are most likely to see larvae in their fields.

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Black Cutworm Monitoring 2014: We Need Your Help!

By Adam Sisson, Integrated Pest Management

Black cutworm moths are blown into Iowa with spring storms each year. The moths lay eggs in crop fields and emerging black cutworm larvae cut seedling corn (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). However, black cutworms are sporadic pests and scouting is essential to determine if management is necessary. To make scouting easier, the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program at Iowa State University coordinates an annual monitoring network that uses moth trap captures and temperature data to estimate when farmers are most likely to see larvae in their fields.



Figure 1. Seedling cornfield with cutworm damage. Photo courtesy Jon Kiel.



Figure 2. Black cutworm larva. Photo courtesy Jon Kiel.

The power in this program is from all the volunteers who place traps and check them for cutworm moths. This is why we are asking farmers, agribusiness and others to help out. The more data we have from across the state the better the scouting estimates we can produce.

Basically, cooperators will be sent a cutworm trap that they construct and then monitor every other day. Cooperators record the number of moths and post this data at www.ncjpipe.org at least once per week. Black cutworm monitoring starts the last week of March and stops around the beginning of June.

To become a cutworm cooperator, send an e-mail to bcutworm@iastate.edu with your contact information. Please let us know by March 15 to allow enough time for shipping.

This year we also have a unique opportunity for folks planting non-Bt corn or non-BT corn with a rye cover crop. Mike Dunbar, a research entomologist at Iowa State University, is looking for farmers planting non-Bt corn in 2014 who would be willing to let him scout their cornfields for black cutworm and armyworm. Fields would be scouted weekly from early April through the end of May using pheromone traps and visual counts of insects. Any relevant information about pest insects will be conveyed to the farmers. An acceptable field could be just a block or structured refuge of non-Bt corn. He is also looking to scout non-Bt corn in 2014 with a rye cover crop in that same field.

Please contact Mike Dunbar at dunbar@iastate.edu or 443-362-0875 if you would be interested in participating or have any questions about the non-Bt and rye cover crop field scouting opportunity.

Adam Sisson is an Integrated Pest Management extension specialist. He can be reached at ajsisson@iastate.edu or (515) 294-5899.

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