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Western bean cutworm flight starts--early!

Abstract
Adult western bean cutworms were first collected at two locations in Iowa on June 23--the earliest date they have ever been collected in the state. Single adults were captured in blacklight traps near Correctionville (Woodbury County) in western Iowa and Ames (Story County) in central Iowa. A blacklight trap in Boone County captured 19 adults on June 26. A historical look of western bean cutworm captures for Woodbury County is shown in the table.

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Insects and Mites

Western bean cutworm flight starts—early!

by Marlin E. Rice, Department of Entomology

Adult western bean cutworms were first collected at two locations in Iowa on June 23—the earliest date they have ever been collected in the state. Single adults were captured in blacklight traps near Correctionville (Woodbury County) in western Iowa and Ames (Story County) in central Iowa. A blacklight trap in Boone County captured 19 adults on June 26. A historical look of western bean cutworm captures for Woodbury County is shown in the table.

What these early trap captures suggest is that the moths will be searching for the most mature corn fields in which to lay their eggs. They are attracted to pollinating and silking-stage corn and those fields that are now just beginning to tassel (I have seen one in Story County) should be the most attractive to the adult females. Therefore, any corn that is tasseling during June and is not protected with Herculex® should be closely scouted for western bean cutworm egg masses. According to the University of Nebraska, the economic threshold is eight egg masses per 100 plants.

Thanks to Sara and Ben Linn for operating the blacklight trap and providing the data from Woodbury County.

Five-year blacklight captures of western bean cutworm adults in western Iowa. Woodbury County, 2002–2006.

	Western Bean Cutworm Adults			
Year	First Capture	Peak Capture	Last Capture	Total
2002	June 28	July 13	August 11	12,739
2003	July 10	August 1	August 17	244
2004	July 5	July 23	August 10	531
2005	June 28	July 13	August 11	1,328
2006	June 23	—	—	—

Marlin E. Rice is a professor of entomology with extension and research responsibilities in field and forage crops.

Plant Diseases

Fungicides: Plant health fungicide applications

by Daren Mueller, Department of Plant Pathology

Seventh in a series

If you take a look at the current distribution of soybean rust in the United States and listen carefully to the experts on the chances of rust making it to Iowa, you have to be encouraged. Despite the good news about soybean rust not spreading quickly (or hardly at all), there have been several reports of chemical reps from major fungicide manufacturers trying to convince growers to purchase fungicides and apply them to soybean to enhance plant health, leading to higher crop yields; suggested treatments involve QoI-containing fungicides, such as Headline® or Quadris®.

During the next 30 days, many soybean acres in Iowa will move from flowering to the early pod fill, which is the targeted period for "plant health" applications of fungicides. In the absence of soybean rust and significant risk of infection by the rust pathogen, the decision to apply a "plant health" fungicide application is not as straightforward as some might believe. There is not general agreement among university and industry scientists regarding the potential for "plant health" applications to result in economical benefits to producers—economical means that dollars return per acre exceeds dollars invested in fungicide/application costs.

Arguments for not spraying fungicides for "plant health"

In 2005, fungicide studies were set up across the Midwest and northeastern United States. In all, 62 plots with different fungicide/timing combinations were completed. Significant yield results were encountered