



April 2, 2004

CHECK NOW FOR ARMY CUTWORM

Wouldn't it be wonderful to summer in the Rockies each year. That is what the army cutworm moth does. They summer in the Rockies feeding on sweet wildflower nectar in the high meadows. When fall comes they swoop back down over the plains and let the wind lead them to unsuspecting wheat and alfalfa fields. Army cutworms are rarely found in Eastern Nebraska but then this is a rare year.

Army cutworm have been found from McCook to Beatrice this year feeding on wheat and alfalfa fields. Homeowners can expect a lot of gray and brown "millers" flying around again this May and June around garage lights and attempting to get into homes as a result of the army cutworms. The army cutworm moth seems to prefer fall seeded alfalfa fields, thin alfalfa fields and thinner wheat fields. They are leaf feeders and usually occur in significant numbers when they are present. They are a pale grey to darker grey colored hairless worm which grows from one-fourth inch to two inches when fully grown. The larvae climb the plant and feed on leaves. They have a wide range of hosts, but will feed most on plants which are green as they hatch in March and early April. Thus, they pose the greatest threat to alfalfa, wheat, and in some cases, possibly lawns.

Fall seeded alfalfa should be sprayed if there are two or more army cutworms per square foot. The damage could include thinning of these fields as well as loss of the first cutting. In older established alfalfa fields, four per square foot of greater numbers would be the threshold for control.

In wheat, the threshold numbers actually go down as the plant gets larger. Five larvae per square foot or more if the wheat is in the tillering of early joint stage. The threshold would be reduced to two larvae per square foot for late joint stage and heading wheat. Army cutworm can cause significant loss of yield by crawling up the plant and clipping the heads.

The army cutworm can be controlled with a wide variety of registered insecticides including Lorsban, Mustang, Pounce, Baythroid, and Sevin. Check with your chemical supplier for specific products. For more information, go to our website at www.saline.unl.edu and look at the front page under "News from Saline County" for the army worm news release and links. Under "Publications," you can refer back to past columns I have written by subject matter categories.

NEW LOOK IN WEATHER FORECASTS

There is a new link in the National Weather Service office in Omaha that can give you a graphic forecast for the next several days which includes hourly estimates of temperature, wind direction, wind speed, rainfall possibility, dew point and relative humidity. This could be of great interest for looking at the timing of baling hay, doing spraying work, or for controlled burns of grassland. You can take a look by getting on the website at www.crh.noaa.gov/oax. You then click on an area in Saline County with the mouse (goes by 5 mile grids), and scroll down to the bottom of the screen and click on the link that says, "Hourly Weather Graph." Hit this link and you can instantly



graph temperature, humidity, wind, wind direction, precipitation probabilities for your town or farm field. This great innovation in forecasting weather by a daily graph will be very useful to fireman, farmers and people that work in prescribed burns.

For more information, e-mail Randy Pryor at rpryor1@unl.edu or call the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension in Saline County at 821-2151 or visit our web site at www.saline.unl.edu.

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