

## BE AWARE OF SOYBEAN INSECT PESTS IN 2020



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It seems each year we are introduced to a new soybean pest that we must be aware of. In 2020 we are weeks ahead of 2019 and conditions have been much drier this past spring. The temperatures have been extremely variable, with a very cool May, and now one of the hottest starts to June since the 1930s. Stressful to say the least for seedling soybean plants. The key is to be vigilant in scouting fields as crops progress during the growing season. **CropWatch** is an excellent resource for information on pests in the state and comes out weekly. With its extensive network of crop consultants, crop Extension educators and Extension Specialists throughout the state you can get timely information there at: <https://cropwatch.unl.edu/>. Already in 2020 in soybeans, we have had isolated reports of defoliation from thistle caterpillars (Painted Lady Butterflies) larval stage.

In 2017 we had a large population of Painted Lady Butterflies in the area, with some fields treated due to defoliation by the thistle caterpillars. In 2019 we had some issues with this pest as well, but with the earlier planting of soybeans, it may not be as much of an issue in 2020. Treatment thresholds are 30% and 20% defoliation for soybeans in the vegetative and reproductive stages respectively. A previous article in CropWatch shows how to estimate defoliation in soybeans. This article can be accessed at: <https://cropwatch.unl.edu/2017/managing-soybean-defoliators>. Keep a watch out for a second generation of thistle caterpillars, Japanese beetles, silver spotted skipper caterpillars and the more common pests, bean leaf beetles and grasshoppers throughout the growing season.

Several years ago a few farmers in Nemaha and Richardson county treated fields due to defoliation from the silver spotted skipper. It is important to know the life cycle of insects because sometimes treatment may not be necessary. In 2018 soybean growers in parts of Cass county had infestations of Japanese beetles that required treatment.

There is even the potential for soybean aphids to infest fields, depending what environmental conditions develop throughout the summer. We have had isolated incidence of these insects in previous years so be aware of potential problems. Some soybean growers in southeast Nebraska, primarily Cass County have experienced the soybean gall midge. Through 2019, we have not had issues with it Nemaha, Johnson, Richardson and Pawnee Counties. There may have been some infestations in Otoe County, but the epicenter of this pest is in Saunders County and moving out from there. Fields in Lancaster County were impacted the last couple years as well. A recent article in **Cropwatch** discusses the soybean gall midge (SGM) and how you can join the SGM Alert Network, which contacts you when adult gall midges emerge. Here is access to this article and how to join this network; <https://cropwatch.unl.edu/2020/2020-soybean-gall-midge-alert-network>. The article lists management strategies to reduce impact from the soybean gall midge, but if you haven't had an issue in previous years you may not have to worry. Unfortunately once the adults emerge and lay their eggs in the soybeans, spraying with an insecticide probably is too late. It is important to know potential issues if they make their way into our area of the state and to how best neutralize them.

Another challenging soybean pest is which is increasing in parts of southeast Nebraska is the Dectes Stem Borer. Similar to the soybean gall midge, once it is in the soybean stem,

there is no insecticide that will control it. The important thing is to identify fields that are infected and harvest these as soon as mature to reduce harvest losses. In future years do not plant soybeans next to a field that was infected the previous year. More research is being conducted to determine strategies to reduce the impact of stem borers as well; i.e. use of a trap crop around the borders of fields. Here is a link to an article from *CropWatch* that discusses the stem borer and references different publications about it; <https://cropwatch.unl.edu/dectes-stem-borer-emerging-soybeans> . For specific questions about any of these pests feel free to contact Gary Lesoing at [glesoing2@unl.edu](mailto:glesoing2@unl.edu) , (402) 274-4755 or (402) 274-9639 (cell).

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June 2020