

AGRONOMIC ALERT



Webworms in Soybeans

July and August are usually the peak months for possible damage from infestations of webworms (*Loxostege cerealis*) in soybeans. Webworm populations are usually not widespread throughout the field; however, significant damage can occur quickly. Webworms can be controlled and damage can be minimized if populations are detected and treated early.

Biology

Double-crop and late-planted soybeans tend to be at an increased risk of damage associated with webworms. Often the webworms feed on alfalfa or weeds such as tall water hemp or other pigweed species. Beige webworm moths often migrate to soybeans from alfalfa fields after the alfalfa has been harvested or when weeds are treated and their food supply is diminished. Moths lay their eggs on the soybeans. Larvae are slender and green or sometimes brownish orange with three black spots or tubercles in a triangular pattern on each body segment. One or more stiff hairs extend from each tubercle (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Webworm larvae. (Photo used with permission from Dr. Scott Akin, University of Arkansas)

Webworms spin webs around the leaves they are feeding on and grow up to an inch in length before feeding stops and they pupate in the soil. Usually larvae complete their development in 3 to 5 weeks (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Feeding damage from webworms.

Scouting

Webworms can quickly cause significant damage to soybean fields (Figure 3). Careful scouting is required since multiple generations can occur over the season. Yield reduction can be



Figure 3. Damage to soybeans from webworms.

anticipated if mid-summer defoliation reaches 60 percent in fields. Webworms are commonly found as localized field infestations. However, treatment may be necessary if 10 to 12 percent of plants have heavy webbing in the top leaflets. Defoliation levels of 30 percent before bloom or 20 percent from bloom to pod fill also warrant insecticide treatment.

Management

There are a lot of management options for growers for the control of webworms. The worms are generally not difficult to control and the treatments are usually economical and effective. Synthetic pyrethroids, organophosphate insecticides, and a combination of pyrethroids and organophosphates can be used to treat webworms. But remember, webworm infestations are often localized infestations and it may not be necessary to treat an entire field. Please see Table 1 for a partial list of treatment options.

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Table 1. Select Insecticides Labeled for Application on Soybeans for Webworms

Insecticide	Rate (per acre)
Baythroid® XL*	1.6 to 2.8 oz
Sevin®	1 to 1.5 lb a.i.
Cobalt™*	13 to 26 oz
Tombstone™*	1.6 to 2.8 oz
Delta Gold®*	1.5 to 1.9 oz
Proaxis™*	3.2 to 3.84 oz
Lambda-cyhalothrin (several products)*	Check use rate for specific product
Cheminova Methyl 4EC*	2 pints
Endigo ZC®*	3.5 to 4.5 oz
Permethrin (several products)*	Check use rate for specific product
Mustang MAX™ EC*	2.8 to 4.0 oz
Hero™*	4.0 to 10.3 oz

**Restricted Use Insecticides*

Sources:

Stalcup, L. April 1, 2010. *Watch for webworms: keep an eye out for webworm pests in your soybean fields. Corn and Soybean Digest.*
 Whitworth, R. J. et. al. 2010. *Soybean Insect Management 2010. Kansas State University, MF-743.*

Individual results may vary, and performance may vary from location to location and from year to year. This result may not be an indicator of results you may obtain as local growing, soil and weather conditions may vary. Growers should evaluate data from multiple locations and years whenever possible.

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