

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

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"Fall Armyworms"

You can tell there is an issue, when you receive multiple phone calls/texts/emails about one subject before 9am Monday morning. The topic this week has been Armyworms. Fall Armyworms are alive and well in Greenwood County.

We've heard and seen reports of Armyworms in crop ground and lawns alike. You can identify these worms for their whitish inverted "Y" on the top of their dark colored head. Our Southeast Area Agronomist was in Greenwood County on Tuesday to look at the situation. He attributes our "ideal weather environment" this summer to the healthy population of Armyworms throughout Eastern Kansas.

Fall Armyworms are a tropical insect species. As such, usually these worms are only found in southern Florida and southern Texas. Mild wintertime temperatures assure their survival. In fact, fall armyworms activities are continual in those warmer environments. With our extremely warm summer at the right times, Fall Armyworms have thrived in the Eastern part of our State.

The key to controlling armyworms are to be scouting your fields/lawns appropriately and to find them when they are smaller. Smaller worms will do superficial feeding, while larger larvae cause more extensive damage. Damaged grasses may become withered and brown. Under large populations, the appearances of "browned areas" occurs in very short order (24 hours or less). However, FALL ARMYWORMS SELDOM KILL GRASS- rather, than nubbing a plant down to the crown and growing point, worms will select a more tender adjacent grass blade to feed upon. Of course, under heavy feeding pressure, worms may be forced to feed deeper down on a plant, but usually, when the food supply becomes scarce or "tough" the worms will move on in mass to adjacent areas.

So the question is, once you find Armyworms how do you treat the problem?

For lawns if insecticide applications are considered, carbaryl (Sevin), cyhalothrin (Spectracide Triazicide), permethrin (38 Plus Turf, Termite & Ornamental Insect Spray; Lawn, garden, pet & livestock insect spray; Eight yard & garden RTS) and spinosad (Conserve, Monterey Garden Insect Spray, Captain Jack's Dead Bug Brew, Natural Guard Spinosad) and Dylox (BioAdvanced 24-Hour Grub Control) are commonly available materials registered for control of fall armyworm. Spray treatments have greater and quicker contact efficacy than granular applications. Granular treatments require irrigation or rain to activate the insecticide from the dry granular carrier. Professional lawn care service personnel have accessed to additional materials (such as Scimitar and Deltamethrin) which may have more persistence than homeowner products. For treatment recommendations on specific crops, call the extension office for treatment guidance.

For more information regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Lindsay Shorter, at

lindsayshorter@ksu.edu, or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.