

## Corn borers on rise in Delaware

NEWARK, Del. — Entomologists with the University of Delaware Agricultural Experiment Station have just completed their annual fall European corn borer survey. The results show a three-year trend toward higher ECB populations in the state, with more than a 100-percent increase this year over the 1980 average, reports chief surveyor Charles E. Mason.

He found an average of 474 overwintering borers per 100 plants this fall, compared to only 231 a year ago.

Like many other insects, corn borer populations run in cycles.

Right now, says the insect ecologist, their numbers are on the upswing. The last high population occurred in 1978, when an average of 569 borers per 100 plants were found. By the following year, the population had dropped to only 154. The most corn borers ever recorded during the 45-year history of the survey was 707, back in 1977.

It's too soon to predict what impact the present ECB population will have on next season's crop, says Mason. A lot depends on how many larvae survive the winter on the amount of egg laying in the spring, and on the rate of

parasitism. In recent years, surveyors have found increased numbers of *Lydella thompsoni* a fly that parasitizes the borer.

Paul P. Burbutis, a specialist in biological control at the Experiment Station, has been studying the *Lydella* parasite, which he says he believes can be of help in reducing ECB populations in the state. The Kent county field which last year had the highest percent of parasitized larvae had the lowest number of borers per 100 plants this year — a promising sign.

The 1981 Delaware ECB survey was conducted September 22

through October 7. Ten fields in each county were sampled. Twenty-five plants from each field were examined. From these, the percentage of plants infested and the number of live borer larvae per 100 plants were determined.

New Castle county had roughly half as many borers per 100 plants

as did the remaining two counties, reports Mason. Three of the four fields having the highest number of borers per 100 plants are located within 11 miles of each other in any area west of Milford. Number of borers per 100 plants ranged from lows of 34 and 48, to highs of 1050, 1200 and 2200.

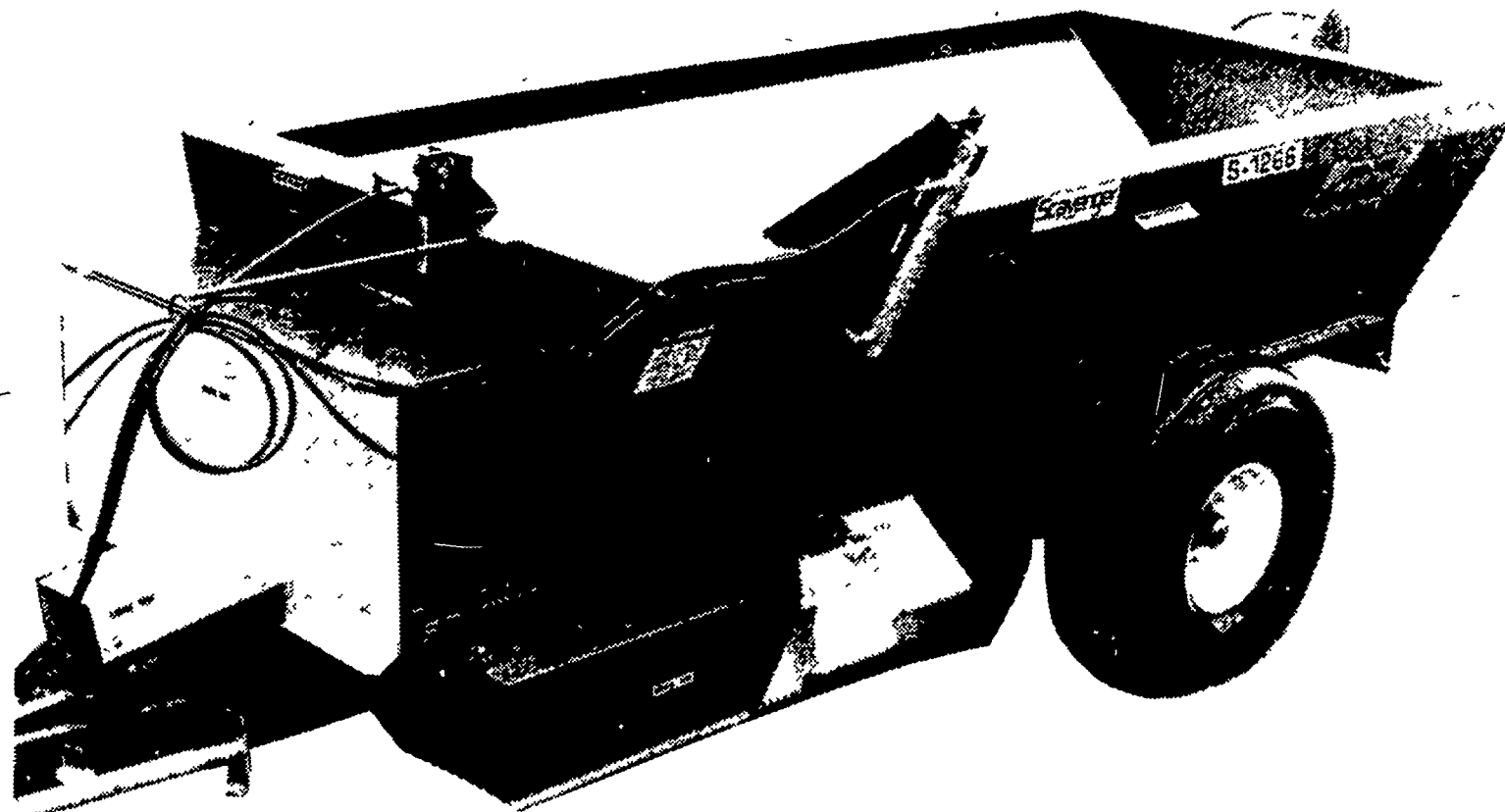


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