

Md. to turn tables on soybean pest

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — Agricultural scientists at the University of Maryland have set their sights on making one particular crop pest its own worst enemy. Scientists at the University of

Maryland's Eastern Shore's Soybean Research Institute say they plan to use some of the very same bacteria found on the Silver Spotted Skipper as a means of controlling the pest without chemicals.

The Silver Spotted Skipper, now in hibernation, emerges in spring and feeds on one of Maryland's top cash crops - soybeans. Although it is a relatively new pest to Maryland soybeans, pest management specialists estimate

the Silver Spotted Skipper can defoliate up to 30 or 40 percent of a soybean field.

According to Carolyn B. Brooks of the Soybean Research Institute, scientists last summer collected the insect larvae from soybean fields and examined bacteria and other organisms found on the Silver Spotted Skipper.

They believe that, of the 10 different organisms they've isolated, at least one can be used to make the insect sick, says Brooks.

If that is so, the organism that gives the Skipper "the bug" could be multiplied in the laboratory and sprayed on a soybean field when a pest outbreak is imminent, according to Brooks.

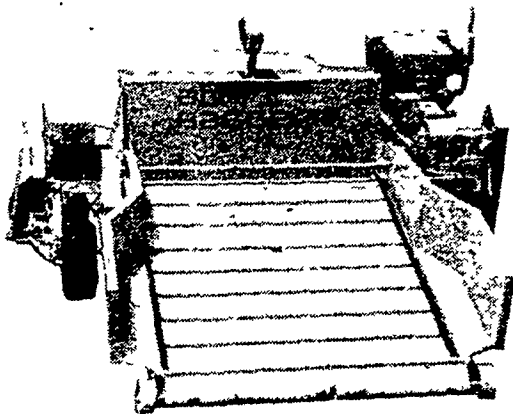
Because the Silver Spotted

Skipper now is in hibernation, Brooks says she will "feed" isolates of the 10 organisms to corn earworms to determine which cause disease.

If one or more are successful, scientists later this year will try those on the Silver Spotted Skipper and compare the results of this experimental biological control method with traditional commercial insecticides.

In the minority

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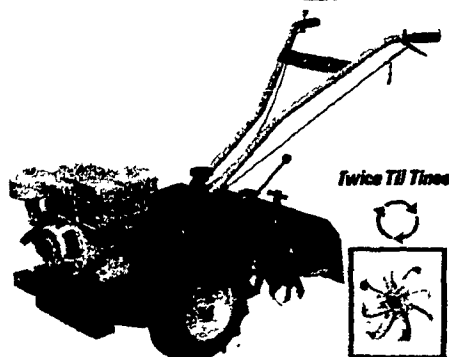
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