

## Slugs Feeding On Corn Earlier This Year

WOOSTER, Ohio - Slugs are feeding on corn earlier than usual in no-till fields, and crop injury could become serious in the coming weeks.

Although feeding injury in north central Ohio was slight in mid-May, the newly hatched slugs could potentially cause more damage as they get bigger, says entomologist Ron Hammond, Ohio State University. Damage may already be apparent in fields where slugs would have hatched even earlier.

Corn and soybeans are most

vulnerable to slug damage from the time of seed germination to the early plant development stages before the crop can outgrow their damage. Thus, it will take fewer slugs to cause economic injury to the smaller plants that have just emerged. Economic injury can occur very fast after feeding starts in a field.

Seeds are also vulnerable in exposed furrows or if slugs have other kinds of opportunities to reach the seed.

Growers and scouts should

keep a close watch on fields with a history of slug damage. This damage might also start being seen in soybean fields.

The potential for a slug problem after last year's drought puzzles Hammond because slugs are associated with cool, wet conditions. Apparently slugs found some soil moisture to survive the mild winter. By early May, OSU entomologists were finding large numbers of egg hatches two to three weeks ahead of schedule in north central Ohio.

Dusk is the best time to scout for slugs; no-till fields—which are farmed without plowing and have last season's harvested crop residues covering the ground—are the prime candidates because slugs don't survive well in plowed fields. Farmers should lift crop residues to check the condition of non-emerged seedlings.

Most numerous and damaging is the gray garden slug.

Depending on field conditions, the dusky slug can be damaging, and to a lesser extent,

the marsh slug. The dusky slug can cause significant stand loss in soybeans without a corresponding percentage of defoliation.

Learn more about slugs in OSU Extension Field Crops Pest Management Circular No. 20, "Slugs on Ohio Field Crops," <http://ohioline.ag.ohio-state.edu>. Or, write for information at College of Food, Agricultural, & Environmental Sciences, Ohio State University 216 Kottman Hall, 2021 Coffey Road Columbus, Ohio 43210.

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