

Wind Patterns Right For Additional Insect Pressure This Season

MOUNT JOY (Lancaster Co.)
— Warmer weather and southerly wind patterns moving up from the Gulf of Mexico mean growers in the Northeast could expect additional unwanted Southern visitors in their corn and alfalfa this summer.

An especially warm, breezy week in mid-April already introduced an early wave of black cutworm and true armyworm moths into the area. If current weather patterns hold, alfalfa growers could see potato leafhoppers, as well. That's why agricultural specialists with Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc., say awareness and proper pest management can help minimize the potential for challenges later in the growing season.

"We're advising growers to be aware of the potential for these three pests," says Joey Mayer, a Pioneer agronomist based in Pennsylvania. "We've already seen heavy cutworm and armyworm moth flights. However, that doesn't necessarily mean we'll see crop damage later in the season because these insects depend on other factors to prosper."

Temperature, rainfall and egg hatch of other predators and parasites also influence the survivability of these insects.

"It's hard to know whether we should worry about these pests right now," says Mayer. "However, every eight or nine years, we do have a serious problem, and we're due. That's why it's important to be prepared for both black cutworm and armyworm in corn."

Black Cutworm

According to Mayer, black cutworm moths are the traditional dull, grayish-brown miller moths that are attracted to lights at night. Their larvae are shiny and smooth gray or dark brown worms with stripes and spots on the back. When touched, they coil into a "C" shape.

First-generation offspring hatch prior to corn planting and feed on weeds before moving to corn seedlings. Young larvae feed on the new leaves of the plants, while older larvae tunnel into the plant below ground. Three to four generations in one season are common, although the first generation is the most concerning.

True Armyworm Moths

Armyworm moths are about an inch long with tan wings and a white spot centered on each front wing. Larvae are an inch and a half long and are green with dark stripes. They move in a looping motion.

Moths typically lay eggs in grass or small grain fields that are planted to corn later. Larvae move en masse (like army soldiers) to feed on the upper leaves of corn plants.

Mayer says growers have three choices when it comes to managing these two corn pests.

- Do nothing and hope infestation does not become an issue.
- Spend about \$4 an acre and add a pyrethroid insecticide to pre- or post-emergence herbicide treatments as an insurance policy in case infestation levels become a concern.
- Scout fields twice weekly as soon as plants emerge, starting with late-planted, low, damp areas with heavy weed growth or plant stubble. If you see two cutworms per 100 plants or believe that three percent of the stand is affected, you may want to treat. When checking for armyworms, if 25 percent of all plants checked show damage, consider treatment.

Tillage can reduce the potential for infestation provided you were in the fields before the first flight of moths arrived in mid-April. If you plowed after moths were spotted in the area, you may be too late and should opt for an insecticide treatment to eliminate the pest.

"It's important to know what's happening in your fields because if infestation levels do reach a high this year, you could lose 30 to 40 percent of your crop," Mayer says.

Potato Leafhopper

Mayer says you'll also want to watch alfalfa stands for potato leafhoppers. Adult leafhoppers, like cutworm and armyworm moths, blow in on a southern wind current. These lime-green, wedge-shaped winged insects measure one-eighth of an inch and are difficult to see because of their size and the fact that

they seek cover when plants are disturbed.

Adults and their nymphs feed on established stands but also are attracted to new seedings. They use a mouth probe to extract leaf tissue. The probe wounds the plant, leading to leaf chlorosis, which begins as a v-shaped yellowish color at the leaf tips and eventually stunts plant growth.

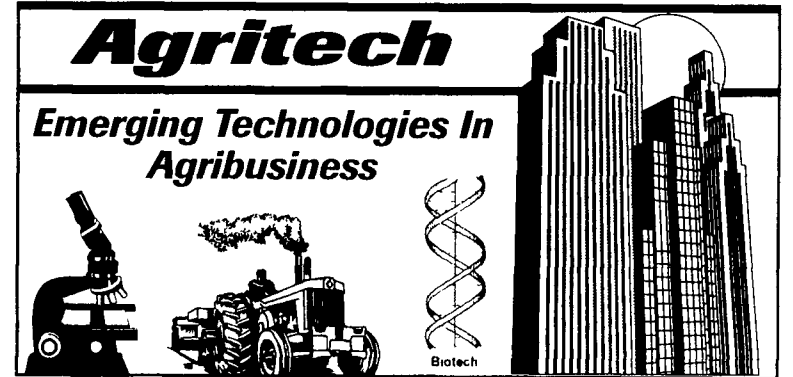
Mayer says the pest does not affect first-cutting alfalfa. However, this year, you may see signs of injury in second cuttings because of the warmer weather and earlier arrival of leafhoppers.

One way to monitor leafhopper activities is to scout

fields using a seep net. Two leafhoppers per 10 sweeps are considered high in a new spring seeding of alfalfa and mean you'll want to consider spraying your crop. Older stands are more tolerant to feeding but should be monitored closely.

Mayer suggests using a pyrethroid insecticide with little or no residual effect in early to mid-June. However, if you've planted leafhopper-resistant varieties, you might be able to hold off, as these plants better withstand infestation.

For more information about managing cutworms, armyworms or potato leafhopper this season, contact your local Pioneer seed professional.



RMS Launches Technology To ID Track Animals

FORT COLLINS, Colo. — RMS Research Management Systems USA, Inc. (RMS), is marketing a national identification and tracking technology for livestock.

This secure, easy to use, cost-effective system can handle infinite numbers of unique livestock identification codes, enabling users to source verify and rapidly trace health history of individual animals.


RMS recently licensed the rights to the technology used for the Canadian Cattle Identification System (CCIS), and has used this proven infrastructure for the foundation in developing a new global identification system. RMS expanded the CCIS technology beyond health and safety applications to include detailed production and carcass information for individually identified livestock.

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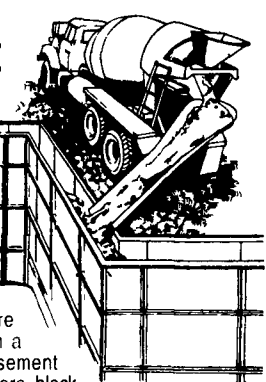
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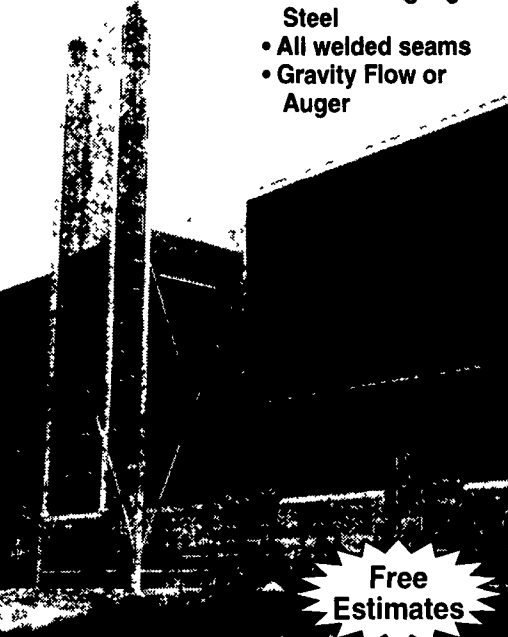
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