

# Northwest Plains Pest Management News

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Local weather stations recorded from .44 to 1.6 inches of precipitation in the last seven days. Reports exceeding 3.5 inches were received from producers south of Muleshoe. Many crops have already been hurt by drought conditions but the recent rains will definitely help the crops.

**Beet armyworms** have made an appearance in many area crops. Populations justifying an insecticide treatment have been observed in cotton and blacked peas, and reports of treatable populations in alfalfa and sunflowers have been received. Some infestations have been in fields with pigweed present but some have been in weed free fields. No doubt a field with pigweed is at greater risk than a weed free field but most any field could become infested.



BAW egg mass.

Beet armyworm eggs are laid on both leaf surfaces in masses covered by a whitish, velvety material. Young beet armyworms “web up” and feed together on leaves, but eventually disperse

| Cotton Heat Unit Accumulation <sup>1</sup> |         |      |                        |
|--|---------|------|------------------------|
| Location                                   | Current | 2007 | Long Term <sup>2</sup> |
| Farwell                                    | 1328    | 1099 |                        |
| Friona                                     | 1326    | 1075 |                        |
| Muleshoe                                   | 1442    | 1117 | 1332                   |
| Muleshoe WR                                | 1484    | 1139 |                        |

<sup>1</sup> DD 60 based on May 1

<sup>2</sup> Based on Muleshoe long term weather data 1971-2000

and become more solitary in their feeding habits. Beet armyworm larvae are 1 inch (25 mm) long when fully grown. They are usually dull green but color can vary from pale to dark green with wavy, light-colored



Small BAW.

stripes running down the back and a broader pale stripe along each side. They usually have a dark spot on each side of the body above the second true leg.

Early-season infestations in cotton feed on leaves and terminal areas. Occasionally they destroy the terminal, causing extensive lateral branch development and delayed maturity. Larvae skeletonize leaves rather than chewing large holes in them. Damaging infestations sometimes develop late in the season when beet armyworms also feed on terminals, squares, blooms and bolls. Several factors can contribute to these late-season beet armyworm out-breaks. These factors are: mild winters; late planting; delayed crop maturity; heavy early-season organophosphate or

| Daily Water Use   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Crop              | Inches per day |
| Corn              | .26-.32        |
| Cotton            | .26-.29        |
| Grain Sorghum     | .20-.25        |
| Bermuda grass     | .18            |
| Fescue/ Bluegrass | .24            |

pyrethroid insecticide use; prolonged hot, dry weather conditions; presence of beet armyworms prior to bloom; and weather conditions that support long-distance migration. Additional characteristics of high risk fields that consistently appear to fit a pattern for developing beet armyworm problems are: sandy and droughty soils; skip-row planting; fields with skippy, open canopies; drought stressed plants; and fields infested with pigweed. The likelihood of a heavy out-break increases as more of these factors occur in a given location. However, when beet



Large BAW.

armyworm populations are high all fields are susceptible. When beet armyworms begin to damage the fruit, control may

be justified. Infestations usually are spotty within a field, and careful scouting is necessary to determine the need for, and field area requiring, control. Beet armyworms longer than 1/2 inch may be difficult to control. Scout the field by using the whole plant inspection method and apply the findings to the following table to make treatment decisions.

There are no established action thresholds for many minor crops such as **blackeyed peas**. Treatment decisions will have to be made based on crop stage, infestation levels, crop value, and acceptable risk levels. This pest should not be underestimated, it can wreak havoc on a crop in short order.

**Loopers** are infesting many fields as well, they are leaf feeders with reduced risk factor since they do not feed directly on fruit. They are pale green and move with a distinctive looping action.

**Bollworms** have also been observed in area cotton at levels from 0 to 7,500 larvae per acre, most fields thus far have been below action levels. A pest complex including high populations of both bollworm and beet armyworm may need a tank mix of insecticides to adequately suppress both species. Many of the “go to” products for each species are not necessarily the best choice for the other.

Any thoughts of seeding **wheat** early should be carefully considered. The worms that are infesting spring seeded crops (fall armyworm, true armyworm, beet armyworm, not to mention the army cutworm which will migrate in shortly) can easily move into emerging wheat. Newly emerged wheat will be very attractive and damage can be severe. I would consider planting fall crops early to be a high risk proposition.

**Beet Armyworm Action Threshold in Cotton**

| Action Threshold          |                       |                             |                                |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| >10% infested plants and: |                       |                             |                                |
| Cotton stage              | Feeding site          | <1/4 inch larvae            | >1/4 inch larvae               |
| Prior to 5 NAWF           | Primary leaf feeding  | 20,000 larvae per acre      | or 14-24 larvae per 100 plants |
|                           | Obvious fruit feeding | 4,000-8,000 larvae per acre | or 8-12 larvae per 100 plants  |
| After 5 NAWF              | Any                   | 20,000 larvae per acre      |                                |

NAWF=nodes above white flower



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