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NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF:

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ARMYWORMS

We have had several reports of severe outbreaks of fall armyworms in pastures, hay meadows and home lawns lately. Outbreaks of fall armyworms often occur in late summer and fall and follow periods of rain which create favorable conditions for eggs and small larvae to survive. Irrigated fields and lawns are also highly attractive to moths for egg laying, especially during drought conditions.

The fall armyworm feeds on a variety of forage crops, but seem to prefer lush bermuda grass, wheat and rye grass. Other forages which are also hosts for fall armyworms are bahia grass, pearl millet, sorghum sudan hybrids, fescue and various winter annuals.

The adult fall armyworm is an ash-gray moth with a wing-span of about 1.5 inches. The front wings are mottled and have white or light gray spots near the tips. The back wings are white with a narrow, smoky-brown edge. They have an average life span of 2 to 3 weeks. The female lays egg masses of 50 or more which hatch in 2 to 4 days. Development from egg to fully grown larva requires about 2 to 3 weeks. At this point larvae burrow into the soil and form pupae. The moths emerge in about 10 to 14 days.

Fall armyworms are typically most active early in the morning, late in the afternoon or in early evening, but on taller, unmowed grass, they can be observed feeding on foliage throughout the day.

Armyworm damage often seems to appear "overnight." Young armyworms do not eat much. Once larvae are greater than 3/4 inch, the quantity of leaves they eat increases dramatically. During the final 2-3 days of feeding, armyworms consume 80% of the total foliage consumed during their entire development. An infestation may have been present but not detected because of the small size of the caterpillars.

Damage from armyworms seems to come about a month apart. Fields damaged by fall armyworms should be closely monitored for the rest of the season to determine whether further treatment is required. Two weeks after damage has occurred, start checking for small caterpillars.

The density of armyworms sufficient to justify insecticide treatment will depend on the stage of crop growth and value of the crop. Seedling plants can tolerate fewer armyworms than established plants. Infestations of 2 - 3 armyworms per square foot may justify treatment.

Some of the insecticide products labeled for armyworm control in pastures and hay meadows include: Malathion, Sevin, Intrepid, Lannate, Dimilin, Tracer and Mustang Max. Remember to always read and follow all label instructions on pesticide use and restrictions concerning grazing or harvesting for hay.

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