



Fall Armyworm Update

7/11/19

In the past few weeks a Camp County 4-H member and I have been scouting for Fall Armyworms (FAW), our findings are as follows:

The first and second week of the result demonstration, 1 FAW moth was found on the north end of the county and 12 FAW moths were found on the south end. No FAW moths were found these past two weeks (last week of June/first week of July). 3-4 very young, “tip of my finger-nail” sized worms have been found each week, in each pasture (north end and south end).

What does this mean? This means there are FAW moths and larvae (worms) present in minute quantities in Camp County. There is no reason to take action at this time. Keep in mind any insecticides for FAW's are “contact” insecticides, meaning they must come in contact with the worm. These insecticides are not effective on the moth either. The few tiny worms we are seeing are of no concern because larger insects will likely eat these worms before they can reach maturity.

What can you do now? It is important to scout your pastures and lawns for any damage or evidence of armyworm activity. Just be aware of FAW damage and know what to look for: Recognizable damage: pasture patches typically appear browned or burned out resembling drought damage. The damaged patch will increase in size over time, as fall armyworms chew more tender growth. FAWs typically target newly established stands of grasses. Most susceptible is bermudagrass, sorghum, corn, wheat and rye grass, among others. They target hay fields with a dense canopy and vigorous plant growth. Section out 1 square foot and scout for FAW larvae in this one area- if you see more than 2 worms, $\frac{3}{4}$ inch or greater in size, it is time to take action!

Some major characteristics of fall armyworms include: The egg, which is creamy white and dome shaped, with a flat base. The caterpillar, the larva stage, which is what we are most concerned with. When newly hatched, the larva is light green with a dark head capsule and measures approximately 1/16 inch long. As the larva feeds, it becomes darker and longer with light colored lines down the sides of its body. The head is unique in that it has a light yellow inverted “Y” on the top. As it matures, it also contains 4 black dots on the end of its abdomen. Fully grown larva are about 1½ inches long.

Armyworms appear when plants green-up from a rain that has ended a prolonged dry/drought period. You may recall we have been very blessed with rain this year- it will be interesting to follow this research and see what patterns the FAWs have with the extra rain we have received.



Figure 1. Fall Armyworm larva comparison with true or corn armyworm.



Figure 2. Fall Armyworm Moth example

All data and recommendations are based on Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Resources