

Scout for Black Cutworm as Crops Emerge

Jay Chism, Agronomy Specialist

“Recent numbers of black cutworm moths trapped near Lamar indicate that farmers need to scout fields as crops begin to emerge,” say Jay Chism, MU Extension agronomy specialist in Barton County.

“The first significant moth catch was on April 12th”, adds Chism. Control measures are not recommended at this time, but based on the trap date, the larvae may be present around the middle of May. Chism recommends producers step up scouting efforts beginning May 14th.

Stand loss from stem cutting is the most severe damage caused by the cutworm larvae. Cool temperatures and moist soils slow plant growth make plants more susceptible to black cutworm feeding.

“Black cutworm larvae are difficult to detect because they hide during the day and feed mainly at night,” says Chism.

Insecticide treatment is recommended when 2-4 percent of the corn seedlings are cut below the ground. The timing of insecticides will depend on thorough scouting and recognizing black cutworm feeding damage.

Researchers from the University of Missouri have released marked moths in the spring from over wintering sites in Louisiana and Texas and recaptured them three to four days later in the Corn Belt. “Trapping the moths as they migrate from the South is the first step in predicting the timing of this sporadic pest,” says Chism. “We now have our first intense capture, so crop scouting is right around the corner.”