

FROM UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI EXTENSION

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Fall armyworm in grass pastures and alfalfa.**

I have been getting several calls on fall armyworm damage in grass pastures and alfalfa. Damage from fall armyworm larvae can be substantial during late summer and fall when larval numbers often peak. Fall armyworm larvae tend to feed on all tender green tissue which gives infested pastures the appearance of drought. If heavy feeding occurs, grass plants may become severely stunted or killed. Damage may occur on 60 different hosts with tall fescue and orchardgrass being favored host plants. Damage in newly seeded alfalfa can be severe with complete stands of seedling alfalfa destroyed in a matter of a few days. They may also feed on soybeans.

Several generations of fall armyworm occur in Missouri each year. This insect will possess stripes running the length of the body. Identifying characteristics of the larvae include an inverted Y on the face of the insect, four black spots or bumps found on the top of each segment with those on the last segment of a worm arranged in a square pattern, and three white lines on the back of the segment located just behind the head capsule.

Damage in grass pastures often "just appears overnight" as growing larvae become large enough to consume substantial amounts of forage in short periods of time. Larvae are especially active both early and late in the day. Scouting is best accomplished during these periods to gain an accurate estimate of larval numbers. The economic threshold for this pest in grass pastures is three or more larvae per square foot.

Pyrethroid insecticides are effective in controlling armyworm outbreaks. Two products that are recommended for fall armyworm in pasture are zeta-cypermethrin (example: Mustang Max) and lambda-cyhalothrin (example: Warrior II), both sold under various trade names. Control is achieved if 20 gallons or more of water is applied per acre. Be sure to read and follow all label directions and be aware of pre-harvest and grazing restrictions.

For more information on fall armyworm contact your local extension center.

Source: Joni Harper, Agronomy Specialist 573-378-5358

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