

NEWS RELEASE for IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DIANA ROBERTS
AREA EXTENSION EDUCATOR
WSU EXTENSION
SPOKANE COUNTY EXTENSION EDUCATION CENTER
222 N. HAVANA
SPOKANE WA 99202-4799
(509) 477-2167
E-mail: robertsd@wsu.edu
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Wheat Head Armyworm Update July 1, 2009

Researchers are maintaining insect traps for the wheat head armyworm (WHA) around eastern Washington. Numbers of the WHA moth and its related lookalike decreased markedly in collections made the week of June 22.

Our data indicate that the moth flights peaked between June 8 and June 21, 2009. We expect a lag time of 2 weeks between moth appearance and larvae hatching. Most of the larvae should have hatched by this time.

We recommend that farmers across Lincoln and Spokane Counties scout their fields regularly for WHA larvae and damage. Infestation may occur in pockets within a field, so don't rely on a windshield check

The newly hatched larvae cause mottled, white striations on the flag leaf as they feed on the chlorophyll layer. This damage looks similar to cereal leaf beetle damage, but CLB feeding usually shows at the tip of the erect leaf or at the center if the leaf droops over. The WHA larvae are tiny, striped, loopers that move down into the boot to feed on the developing grain. Telltale damage is a small hole bored in the base of each floret. Pictures of WHA larvae and feeding damage may be viewed at <http://www.spokane-county.wsu.edu/smallfarms/index.htm>

We do not have scientifically tested WHA economic thresholds and we are not recommending that growers spray at the first sign of the insect. If a set of 10 sweeps with a net (each 180

degrees) yields 15 larvae, it is cause for concern. It is important to repeat these sets of sweeps at a minimum of 4 locations across each field and to go deep into the field for a realistic picture as insect infestations are typically heavier on field borders. Do the inspections in the evening or early morning as the larvae feed at night and retreat during the heat of the day. Recheck the field after a day or so, and if the numbers are increasing then spraying may be warranted.

For further information or to report a WHA infestation, contact Diana Roberts at WSU/Spokane County Extension, phone 509-477-2167 or E-mail robertsd@wsu.edu. Mary Corps with OSU Extension (phone 541-278-5403 or E-mail mary.corp@oregonstate.edu has information on her blog <http://osucerealcentral.blogspot.com/>

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