Kansas Insect Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants and Extension Personnel

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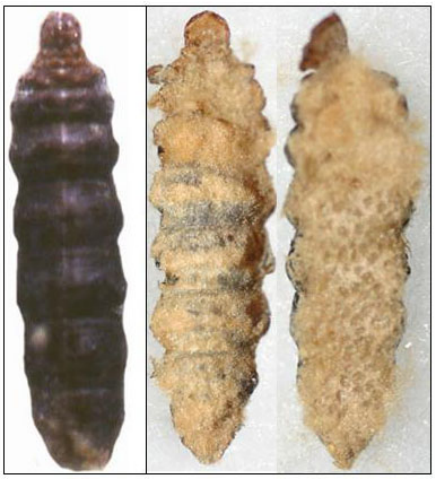
Curtains on the 2013 Bagworms



Bagworms have received their usual due as a topic in the yearly editions of the Kansas Insect Newsletter. Now, all is quiet because bagworm feeding activities were terminated several weeks ago. Currently bagworms are pupating. In a couple of weeks, male bagworm pupal cases will force themselves out of the bottom of their bag so that the moths can emerge and spread their wings. In female bags, female moths (soft fleshy egg-filled larviform objects lacking appendages) will emit their pheromone to attract males. After mating, eggs will be deposited in pupal cases within the each bag. Eggs then overwinter. (Right: pupal case, pupal case split open. Amongst the soft insulating body hairs, individual eggs can be seen)

The below image of current-season bagworm damage was taken August 7, 2013. Bagworms were obviously concentrated in the left planting. The severity of the damage made recovery unlikely. As can be seen 3 weeks later (August 29), the symmetry of the landscaping has been skewed after the heavily infested/damaged hedges were removed.

Between now and the 2014 season, is there anything to be done to curtail future bagworm activities? Possibly. Given the large size of bags and their contrast against background foliage, one might consider hand-picking bags. **IF PRACTICAL!**

Case in point: the sun was in the right position as I drove a familiar route ----- and I noted the aforementioned contrast. Being a small shrub, hand removal seemed a practical option.

When making a recommendation to collect bags, an oft-cited statement is to take a bucket filled with a soapy water solution to place the bags once removed. This can be done if so chosen. But a more important statement is to be thorough when removing bags. That is, if several "female" bags are missed, there is the potential for a continued presence of bagworms the ensuing year.

With bucket and scissors in hand, I snipped away. In total I collected 106 bags. My method of disposal did not entail the soapy-water alternative. Rather, bags would be placed in a polycart to be discarded in a landfill.

So did I completely eliminate a bagworm source? NO! I took an "after-image" following my collection activity. When downloading the image, it was very evident that I missed a few bags (seen hanging). This just goes to exemplify that handpicking (even when seemingly at its easiest) cannot be conducted lackadaisically. If several bags are overlooked in this instance, how many would be missed in a more intense situation (for instance, more bags per tree and several trees in a line)

If confronted with this latter situation, your recourse is to diligently address the problem the following year. **ON YOUR 2014 CALANDER, BOLDLY MARK MAY 1!** This will remind you to seriously take action: conduct regular inspections to determine the initiation of egg hatch, monitor the developmental activities of the bagworms, and apply timely and thorough insecticide applications. If so done, eventual restoration will occur.

Bob Bauernfeind

Insect Diagnostic Laboratory Report

http://entomology.k-state.edu/extension/diagnostician/recent-samples.html

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Sincerely,

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