

Kansas Insect Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants and Extension Personnel



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May 16, 2014 No. 7

Variegated Cutworms

An interesting little highlight, to our otherwise very tedious alfalfa weevil sampling, occurred this spring. We noticed all of the bright orange flags that we use to mark plots had large masses of insect eggs deposited on them on 21 April. These flags had no eggs on 11 April so the moths were actively ovipositing between 11 and 21 April. Even though we were intensively sampling significant amounts of alfalfa foliage, no eggs were detected on any of the plant material. But every flag throughout the field, and even down the wire supports, had masses of eggs. This seems to be a significant indication that something, probably color, attracted the moths. We collected some of these flags and on 22 April they started hatching (see photo 1). Photo 2 is illustrative of the type and amount of feeding damage these 3-day old larvae are capable of doing. Photos 3 and 4 are great for identifying the mature variegated cutworm larvae just prior to pupation.



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Alfalfa Weevils

Alfalfa weevils are mostly finished with the larval stage, in north central Kansas, but there are still a few actively feeding. Most of the population is pupating or the adults have emerged. There are still many adults in some of these fields and some swathing has started. Therefore, as these adults are accumulated in the windrows they will be feeding on the stems, etc. (often called ‘barking’) underneath where it is shaded, thus some foliage differences will occur giving these fields that characteristic stripped appearance. Please remember, if you decide to make an insecticide application prior to swathing, to check the PHI on the label of the product you

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use. This information is available in the KSU Alfalfa Insect Management Guide at: <http://entomology.k-state.edu/extension/insect-information/crop-pests/alfalfa/>

Jeff Whitworth

Holly Davis-Schwartz

Not to Beat a Dead Horse - Epilogue - Brownheaded Ash Sawfly

And Then There Were None is the title of an Agatha Christie novel. However, I apply it to the brownheaded ash sawfly site/situation that we have been closely following in the Kansas Insect Newsletter. We watched ash leaves unfurl (April 15) and the accompanying swarms of ash sawfly “wasps”. We watched as leaves expanded (April 22), and just days later (April 24) when newly emerged larvae created pinhole feeding damage. By April 30, larvae had increased in size and their feeding damage escalated, causing ragged leaves. As of last week (May 6), larvae increased in size and were consuming entire leaves, littering the sidewalks with frass, as well as they themselves dropping out of trees but then ascending trees presumably (on my part) to continue feeding.

On May 9, I was in-the-neighborhood and decided to take a brief look. To my surprise,

I SAW NO LIVING SAWFLY LARVAE! ANYWHERE! Nothing on the leaves, limbs or trunk. But there were many “sick” shrunken & discolored, larvae littering the ground. It resembled the aftermath of an insecticide treatment. I visited with the Riley County forester who said that (while aware of the situation) they did not consider it a spray-worthy. This made me wonder whether high larval populations combined with favorable environmental factors may have made perfect conditions for an epizootic event of some sort. A possibility.



Today (May14), I dug around several trees thinking that possibly there might have been some early maturing individuals that might have successfully burrowed into the soil to create their cocoons and thus survived. I found none. It will have to wait until next Spring to see if (after a 2-year run, brownheaded ash sawfly in these particular instances will be but a forgotten/faded memory.

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At the Community Gardens

This year's cool Spring has somewhat slowed gardening activities. Even cool-season crops have been slow-to-develop. On May 9, the only insect damage that I noticed was inconsequential flea beetle nibblings on rapidly-maturing radish plants. Lettuce and spinach patches were flourishing ---- if there was minor feeding damage from flea beetles, it escaped my cursory glances. Some broccoli ready for harvest was "clean" --- no evidence of imported cabbageworm larvae. Similarly (to this point-in-time), cabbage leaves were devoid of holes, and no small imported cabbageworm larvae were found while inspecting undersides of leaves.

The only apparent on-going activities were Colorado potato beetles on potato plants still small for this time of year (a result of the overall cool weather). Collecting beetles two-at-a-time was easy as most were mating. Egg masses were present. But egg hatch had not occurred ---- at least no larvae were seen.

As of Thursday, May 15, still no Colorado potato beetle larvae were seen ---- cool weather perhaps responsible for prolonging egg development.

Beans have been slow to germinate. But recently emerged plants have immediately been attacked by bean leaf beetles ---- leaves with the typical "holey" appearance (images from 2013). No beetles in sight today ---- cooling their heels during the current cool period. But they will revive and go "gang busters" with the coming week's 80 – 90 degree temperatures.



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Little Clowns – Hollyhock Weevils

At least to me these small weevils are clownish ---- such wee ones (only 2-3 mm long) rapidly running with their loooooong “snouts” (females’ snouts almost approaching the length of her body) extended outward/forward. They are currently active on small developing hollyhocks. Refer back to Dr. Cloyd’s article appearing in Kansas Insect Newsletter 11, May 24, 2012, for complete background information on this insect’s life cycle, damage and control measures.

Bob Bauernfeind

Insect Diagnostic Laboratory Report

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

Eva Zurek

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