

OREGON AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

EXPERIMENT STATION

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OREGON STATE
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27 OCT 1932

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March 2, 1927.

Circular of Information 12.

TIMELY WARNING ON WESTERN ARMY CUTWORM - A WHEAT PEST

by

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An outbreak of the Western Army Cutworm may occur in the wheat fields of Central and Eastern Oregon this spring. Alcoholic specimens of this species of cutworm were received from Mr. Anthony Spuler with the report that they were found feeding upon fall grain near Kahlotus, Washington, and in one case destroyed 60 acres of wheat. These specimens were determined by Mr. Rockwood, Federal Entomologist, as the Western Army Cutworm and he believes there is danger of this worm appearing in the wheat fields of Morrow, Gilliam, Sherman, Wasco, the drier parts of Umatilla, and counties south of these.

The Western Army cutworm is a pale green to dark brown worm with dark stripes on the side and 1 1/2 to 2 inches long when mature. The moth has a wing expanse of about 1 1/4 inches and is dark brown with grey markings on the forewings.

The Army cutworm appears in small numbers each year and normally does little injury to farm crops. Under certain conditions, however, it increases to enormous numbers and travels in armies, eating everything in its path.

The injury to winter wheat usually shows up in the first two months of growing weather in the spring. Usually it appears as bare spots or the wheat seems to be slow in coming up. If cutworms are responsible for the bare spots, the crowns and vigorous root systems of the chewed off plants can be found by following along the drill row with the fingers and the cutworms, themselves, hiding under clods or in the soil. The worms are most likely to be present in greatest numbers along the edge of the yet uninjured plants. If unsprouted seed or dried remains of the wheat plant are found, cutworms are not to blame.

The best time to look for cutworms is from late afternoon until dark. During the hours of brightest sunshine they are hiding in the soil or under clods, feeding and moving about only in late afternoon and during the night.

Control

1. Study the field carefully in the late afternoon or early evening when the worms are active.
2. Frequently cutworms will be found scattered sparingly throughout the field, and if there is a good stand of wheat they may do little harm; but if bare spots begin to appear or if the stand is much reduced, prompt action with control measures is needed.
3. Poison bran mash is the standard remedy for cutworms.

Formula I. Coarse wheat bran ----- 25 lbs.
Salt ----- 1/2 lb.
White Arsenic or Paris Green ----- 1 lb.
Syrup or brown sugar ----- 1 pt.
Water to make a crumbly mash.

Formula II. Coarse wheat bran ----- 16 lbs.
Sodium fluoride ----- 1 lb.
Molasses ----- 2 qts.
Water about 2 gallons.

For additional information on cutworm control see Experiment Station
Circular No. 70.
