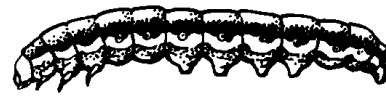
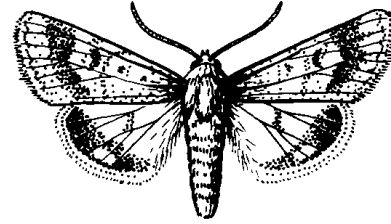


CORN EARWORM *Lepidoptera: Noctuidae Helicoverpa zea*

DESCRIPTION

The corn earworm **moth** is light olive-green, fawn, or reddish-brown. The forewings are marked with a few darker markings. The wingspan is about 35 mm. Mature **larvae** are about 35 mm long and are green, pink, yellow, black, or brown with dark top and above-spiracle stripes, a light spiracle stripe, and a pale stripe beneath the spiracles.



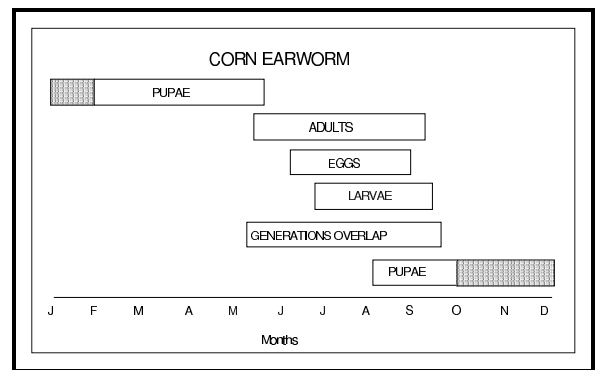
(after USDA Bull. 1371)

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

This is one of the most serious pests in the United States. Larvae attack corn (mainly sweet corn and pop corn), cotton, (cotton bollworm), tomatoes (tomato fruitworm), beans, lettuce, hops, and many other hosts. Larvae feed on the developing silk and kernels of corn and on the tomato fruit. This damage and larval excrement make the crops unmarketable or results in considerable wastage during processing. This pest is usually not a serious problem west of the Cascade Mountains, except in late planted sweet corn.

DISTRIBUTION AND LIFE HISTORY

This pest is widespread throughout the United States and southern British Columbia. The corn earworm overwinters as a pupa in the soil, except in some areas where it is unable to survive the winter because of heavy rainfall. Adults emerge in late May and June and begin laying eggs on suitable hosts. Eggs hatch in five to seven days and larvae feed for two to three weeks, then pupate in the soil. Adults emerge in about two weeks and lay eggs on corn silk or developing fruit. Moths move northward and establish infestations in areas where they cannot overwinter. The summer generations overlap resulting in a regular and gradual build-up of the corn earworm populations from the beginning to the end of the season. There are two to three generations each year in most areas of the northwest. Damage is most severe in August and early September.



MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL

Temperature and moisture are important population regulating factors of this pest. Cool summers delay development of all stages, and cold winters reduce the number which successfully overwinter. Excessive moisture and alternate thawing and freezing during the winter months can reduce the number of

overwintering pupae. Parasites, predators, and diseases also help suppress the population of this pest. Insecticides are commonly used to control larvae of this pest, but the number of applications and their timing is critical. Newly emerged larvae must be controlled on the silk before they enter the ear. See the Pacific Northwest Insect Control Handbook for a list of registered insecticides and proper timing in specific areas.