



Danny L. Cain
Walker County Extension Coordinator
1501 North Airport Road
Jasper AL 35504
(205)221-3392

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The fall armyworm is a perennial crop, forage, and turf pest that has given us problems for more than 100 years now. I remember one time back in the late 1970's when the fall armyworm outbreak was so bad that they ate up most of our corn crop for the year and we didn't get to take our annual family vacation because we still had fertilizer bills to pay. Needless to say, fall armyworms have not exactly been my favorite thing since then.

Fall armyworms are not actually worms but rather they are caterpillars (this means that they will pupate and change into a moth as adults). They typically emerge during late July into mid August; however, I have seen reports of fall armyworm ranging from as early as April well on into late October. Fall armyworms are out in large numbers right now in Walker County. I wanted to thank Garry Rowland, local livestock and hay producer as well as Alabama Farmers Federation State hay and forage crops committee, for providing recent reports of fall armyworm activity. Over the years, Garry and I have talked several times about fall armyworms and he regularly scouts his fields and has learned to identify them early during an outbreak.

They are quite easily recognized. When fully grown, fall armyworm caterpillars can measure up to 1 ½ inches in length with more typical size being ¾ to 1 ¼ inches. They have multiple hatch outs during the year so it is not uncommon to see a mixture of sizes in an infested yard or hayfield. Fall armyworms have an "inverted (upside down) Y" coloration on their heads and four black dots on the end of their abdomen. Once you see these two identification points, there can be little doubt that you have fall armyworms.

Fall armyworms can damage any of a number of crops, vegetables, and even some ornamental plants. The areas where I get more calls on them are either lawn and turfgrass areas or else pastures and hayfields. Fall armyworms seem to attack the most lush well-cared for (and fertilized) grasses first. I see quite a lot of them on bermuda and zoysia lawns because

these tend to be the most highly fertilized. I have also seen them on other turfgrasses including St. Augustine and fescue. While not as common, armyworms will occasionally attack centipede grass. Centipede is not as heavily fertilized as are some of the other grasses and are lower on their food list.

In hayfields (and some extent pastures) where there has been substantial growth accumulation, virtually all the tender green leafy growth may be removed leaving only tough stems. Brown patches appear in the field and can rapidly increase in size. I have literally seen large hayfields devoured in a day or two.

For hay producers, established and healthy bermudagrass is rarely ever killed out completely by fall armyworms. The problem this year is that with hay and forage supplies already reduced because of summer droughts, this is just one more event that can further reduce the amount of winter hay available to producers for feeding cattle through the winter.

The hay producer must make a basic decision whether or not to apply an insecticide for control of the fall armyworms. In cases where hay is ready to cut, it may be best to simply harvest the hay. Armyworms feed mainly on lush green growing grasses and will feed very little on hay once it has been cut. If hay is not ready to harvest and the producer is anticipating a good cutting of late summer/early fall bermuda hay then there are a couple of insecticide choices. The product carbaryl sold as Sevin XLR Plus, Sevin 80S, or Sevin 50 WP is labeled for such uses. The product Lannate is also used to control armyworms. Lannate is a restricted use pesticide and will require a private pesticide applicator permit before it can be purchased and applied. There is a 14 day grazing restriction on areas where carbaryl is applied to pasture and hay land and a 7 day grazing restriction in areas where Lannate is applied.

One alternative is the chemical Spinosad sold commonly as Tracer. When applied at the two ounce per acre limit can give adequate control of small to medium sized fall armyworms without having to worry about grazing restrictions and only a three day restriction prior to cutting hay.

The product Dimilin, also a restricted use product, is effective for small and immature fall armyworms. This product works a bit differently in that it does not kill the fall armyworm outright immediately. Instead, it prevents the fall armyworm from molting into the next stage. There is no grazing restriction and only a 1 day restriction for hay production. Again, however, it will be effective on larger armyworms that are already preparing to pupate.

There are also a number of labeled products for homeowner use to control fall armyworm in turfgrass areas. There are many of these products, you will need to check the label to select the product that will work best in your situation. The products also come in various formulations. Liquid products tend to be more effective for controlling fall armyworm since you can get better coverage and the product can get better penetration beyond the leaf blade to the areas where armyworms tend to live during the warmer parts of the day. Regardless of whether you are applying the appropriate product to pastures or hayfields or in home turfgrass areas, make sure you read and follow the labeled directions of the product you select. This will help to ensure that you protect your own personal safety, the safety of the environment, and that you also do an effective job of controlling this very damaging pest. We have a couple of publications which may be of interest to you if fall armyworms are a problem. ANR 1019 *Management of Fall Armyworm in Pastures and Hayfields* and ANR 172 *Controlling Fall Armyworms on Lawns and Turf* are available free of charge if you stop by our office on Airport Road and ask for them.

Northwest Alabama Fair

Quite a number of you have been calling and asking questions about the Walker County Fair. There have been so many calls in fact that next week's column will be dedicated entirely to the fair and all the activities that will be going on during fair week.

The dates for this year's fair will be September 12 through 16. For anyone interested in entering individual exhibits for judging (and cash awards), the check-in date will be SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9 from 8:00 A.M. until 2:00 P.M. We have categories for virtually anything you could imagine to enter. Just a few of these include art and photography (both youth and adult categories), canned goods, jellies/jams/preserves, baked goods, farm and garden produce, cut flowers, potted plants and flowers, crafts of all descriptions, clothing items, quilts, creative writing and poetry, and others. Like I said, there is almost nothing that we do not have a category for.

If you have several items that you are interested in entering, contact our office at 221-3392 or better yet stop by. You will need to get an exhibitor number and we will need to get your contact information. You can also pick up your entry tags here at the Extension Office. We can also provide you with a list of categories. A complete list of categories and all

fair information will also be provided soon as an insert in an upcoming issue of The Daily Mountain Eagle.