

**To:** Local news

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### **Alfalfa Weevil**

Alfalfa weevil larvae continue to feed and thus increase in size. However, after monitoring several fields throughout northwest Kansas over the last 10 days, there was not yet any field that had a large infestation level. Infestation level is determined by the “stem count bucket” method where individual stems are removed and quickly shaken into a 1-gallon bucket to dislodge any weevil larvae that may be present. Next, count the number of larvae in the bucket and divide into the number of stems shaken into the bucket to get the percent (%) of infested stems. Alfalfa weevil monitoring should continue, however, as we are still relatively early, and more larvae will probably be hatching.

### **Army Cutworm in Alfalfa**

Damage occurs in late February, March, and sometimes in April. This pest is usually more of a problem if dry conditions retard growth. Worms may destroy small plants. Foliage damage can reduce harvest from the first cutting of older alfalfa. Detecting the infestation before foliage is destroyed is critical for control success. If possible, controls should be applied when larvae are above ground. Seedling stands suffer the most damage. Proper sampling requires sifting soil through a coarse mesh screen in at least five places in the field. Treat when two or more larvae per square foot are present in seedling fields, or four or more per square foot are found in established fields. If a majority of larvae are 1-1/4 inch or longer they are about to pupate and treatment is not justified.

### **Army Cutworm in Wheat**

Larvae begin feeding during the winter whenever temperatures rise a few degrees above freezing. Small larvae create “windowpane” holes that often go unnoticed unless plants are carefully inspected. Larvae hide in loose soil at the base of plants, emerging to feed in the evening. Unlike other cutworms, only above ground plant parts are consumed, giving plants the appearance of being grazed by cattle. Infestations in well-established stands will probably not require insecticide applications while wheat is dormant, but some fields never green up in the spring because of cutworm feeding. Frequent inspections during warm periods in March, and early April are strongly encouraged, particularly when preceded by a dry fall. Moisture availability, crop condition, and regrowth potential are all factors influencing potential losses to this pest. Late planted fields under dry conditions with poor tillering may suffer economic damage with as few as one or two larvae per square foot. In most fields, treatment will not be necessary until populations average four to five worms per square foot. Vigorous, well tillered fields under optimal growing conditions can tolerate even higher populations, as many as nine or 10 larvae per square foot, without measurable yield loss. Infestations in later stages of crop development are less damaging than early ones because established plants can compensate for considerable defoliation and larvae normally finish feeding before wheat enters reproductive stages.

### **Pea Aphids**

Pea aphids are prevalent at low levels but increasing in population density. However, much like alfalfa weevils, numbers are somewhat low. These pea aphid populations are often utilized by beneficials early in the season to increase their populations, which often help against other pests in other crops, i.e. greenbugs, corn leaf aphids, soybean aphids, etc. Again, monitoring pea aphids should also continue until swathing.

Alfalfa weevils and pea aphids are considered cool-season pests and primarily affect alfalfa up to the 1st cutting. Most alfalfa weevil larvae may be approaching threatening numbers in the next few weeks with the predicted temperatures of 60-70's for day. Sampling for both alfalfa weevil larvae and pea aphids should be a regular routine and timely scouting of fields up until the first cut.

