

## **Cropland. Cutworm activity in Montana.**

MSU extension entomology has received reports of cutworm activity in winter wheat fields. Army and pale western cutworms (*Euxoa auxiliaris* and *Agrotis orthogonia*) are the most damaging species in Montana, although significant infestations of the dingy cutworm (*Feltia jaculifera*) were reported from the eastern region in 2008. Army and pale western cutworms lay their eggs during the fall season. Army cutworms hatch and begin feeding in the fall while most pale westerns hatch in the spring. Due to the warm fall season army cutworms may be well developed this spring and may particularly damage winter wheat fields. Look for evidence of feeding damage. Army cutworms feed above ground on the leaves at night – watch for damaged leaves. Pale western cutworms feed below ground on the crown and stem – watch for dead or wilted plants and stand reduction. Cutworms are nocturnal, look for the caterpillars by lightly scraping the soil surface during the day.

MSU extension entomology along with agents and producers monitored adult army and pale western cutworms at several sites across Montana with pheromone traps. Trapping results are reported in the two attached graphs (PDF files). Based on the pheromone trap catches, cutworm populations may be higher in 2009 compared to 2008. Fourteen of 17 sites reported more army cutworm moths and 12/17 more pale western cutworm moths compared to the previous year. In some cases the differences were very significant. However, a wet spring season can decrease survival of pale western cutworms. Producers and consultants should scout for cutworms this spring.

In small grains, 4-5 army cutworms and/or 2-3 pale western cutworms per square foot exceed damage thresholds and insecticide treatment is recommended. Pyrethroid insecticides are recommended for controlling cutworms, including: Baythroid XL (1.0 – 1.8 oz / acre wheat), Mustang MAX (1.28 – 4.0 oz / acre wheat, triticale) and Warrior 1E (1.92 – 3.2 oz /acre – wheat, oats, barley, triticale).

Cutworms can damage a variety of crops in addition to small grains. For more information please refer to the MontGuide titled “Pale Western and Army Cutworms in Montana” and pest notes posted on the High Plains IPM Guide <http://highplainsipm.org/>. For further information contact your local extension office or Kevin Wanner, Assistant Professor Entomology & Cropland Extension Entomologist, [kwanner@montana.edu](mailto:kwanner@montana.edu).