

Management Alternatives

Reevaluate for replanting in areas where damage can no longer be managed with insecticide (larvae longer than ½").

When the plant reaches the V-6 stage it becomes **resistant to feeding**.

For pesticide recommendations, consult the Cornell Guide for Integrated Field Crop Management. **Always read and follow the pesticide label.**

Caution: Applying soil insecticides at planting will not provide effective control of cutworm.

Implementation

Plow your field, control weeds, and plant early to **reduce cutworm problems**.

Monitor emerging plants closely, particularly in fields with conditions favoring cutworm outbreaks, such as late planting, weed infestations, wet areas, and fields previously in pasture or sod.

Insecticide sprays should be directed at the base of plants. Field monitoring may indicate the infested area and a 20-40 foot surrounding area need be treated.

Document all actions taken.

Reevaluation

Review previous pest records and your crop plan for the coming year to identify potential problem fields.

Scout from mid-May to early June to determine the need for cutworm management.

For additional help contact your **local Cornell Cooperative Extension** educator.



New York State
Integrated Pest Management
Program

We develop sustainable ways to manage pests and help people to use methods that minimize environmental, health, and economic risks.

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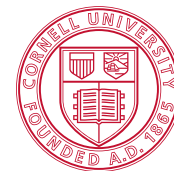
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Black Cutworm in Field Corn

Management Guide



Integrated Pest Management
PROGRAM



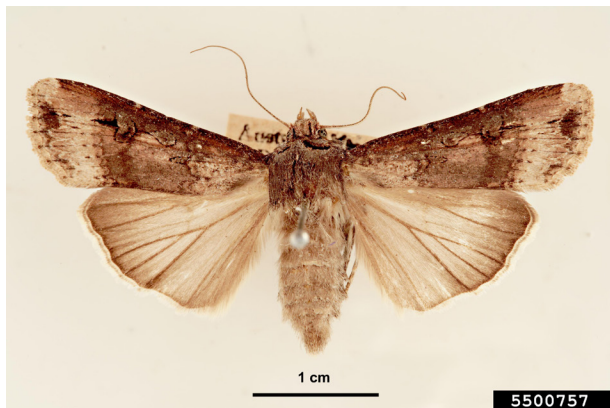
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Identification

Adults

Adults are gray-brown flying moths (1 3/4" long) with dark forewings that are pale near the tips.

Females lay ribbed round **eggs in clusters** on weeds in early spring.



Black cutworm adult. Photo: Pest and Diseases Image Library, Bugwood.org



Damage symptoms. Black cutworm larvae may feed on young corn, and pull the stalk down into the ground from below. Damage shows up as gaps in the normal corn rows. Stalks may also be simply cut off and fall to the side. Photo: Roger Schmidt, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Bugwood.org

Larvae

Larvae vary in color from light gray to black with an indistinct yellow stripe down their back and a pale brown head. They have a shiny appearance with coarse granules present over their body.

There are **seven larval instars** (or molts).

Which instar is it? Using the chart (to right) measure the body, then the head capsule width. (Head capsule width is the best indicator of age.)

Black Cutworm Instar Guide		
Body Length	Instar	Head Capsule Width
	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	
	6	
	7	

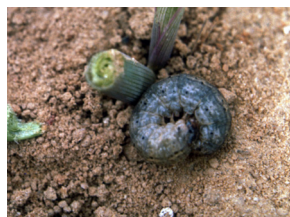
Large larvae are more difficult to kill with most pesticides.

Feeding by the larvae is the chief cause of damage.

Symptoms of damage are leaf feeding, irregular holes in stem, notched and cut plants (wilting), and death of plants.



Black cutworm larva. Photo: John Capinera, University of Florida, Bugwood.org



Larvae curl tightly when handled. Photo: W.M. Hantsbarger, Bugwood.org

Pupae

Pupae are the dormant lifestage of the cutworm that occurs just before the adult stage.

Presence of numerous pupae or large larvae (6th-7th instar) indicates that larval feeding pressure is declining. Large larvae are more difficult to kill with most pesticides.



Black cutworm larva. Photo: Merle Shepard, Gerald R. Carner, and P.A.C. Ooi, Insects and their Natural Enemies Associated with Vegetables and Soybean in Southeast Asia, Bugwood.org

Sampling

Start sampling fields in **mid-May**. Repeat scouting every three days. Larvae usually feed at night or during overcast days. They hide in the soil near the base of plants.

Inspect and **record the damage** on 20 consecutive plants in five areas of the field.

Collect 10 larvae and determine their size and instar by measuring on the instar guide.

Analysis

Treatment with insecticide is suggested if 5 percent or more of the plants have been cut and larvae are still small (1/2 inch or less).