Please read the article below concerning the possibility of fall armyworms through this fall. The fall armyworm can be very destructive to pastures and hayfields sometimes appearing to completely consume a field in a day or two. Other crops such as sweet corn, soybeans, etc. can also be affected. Please take an opportunity to scout your fields to see if control will be needed.

Abundance of Fall Armyworm in Kentucky in 2016

On August 10, 2016, Ms. Patty Lucas (Extension IPM Specialist) checked a pheromone based trap for fall armyworms in Princeton KY, and found less than ten male moths. Then two days later (August 12), she counted more than two hundred male moths in the same trap. Last week the trap counts increased to 479 moths. Also, last week some fall armyworms were found on soybeans in Princeton and Lexington. Last week, fall armyworms were found in Warren County, as well.

Based on historical data, recent reports, and trap counts mentioned above, it is possible that fall armyworms can cause some damage on pastures and cover crops. Bt corn will be not affected. Adult fall armyworms will lay their eggs on grasses. Later it can affect row crops such as sorghum, alfalfa, vegetables and other plants if grasses are not available. The presence of dark patches in pastures may be a sign of the abundance of fall armyworms.

Sweet corn producers should monitor their late plantings closely. Fall armyworm (FAW) can attack the leaves and, when available, will move to the developing ear of sweet corn. Ragged holes in the leaves emerging from the whorl and course, sawdust-like frass are characteristic of fall armyworm (Figure 1).

Sweet corn lines with Bt traits will help to manage FAW. While corn earworm will typically restrict its feeding to the tip of the ear, FAW can attack any part of the ear. With whorl stage sweet corn, sprays for FAW should be directed from over the plant down into the whorl leaves. As the ears form, sprays should be directed to the middle third of the plant to protect the ear.

Fall Armyworm Identification and Management

The fall armyworm has three yellow stripes running along the length of its body. Its head is dark brown with a light-colored, inverted “Y” mark on the front (Figure 2). Application of insecticides should be made when fall armyworm larvae are 0.75 inches long or smaller for best results.
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