

# Kansas Insect Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants and Extension Personnel



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## Alfalfa weevil:

First alfalfa weevil larvae in NC Ks. were actually found hatching on the afternoon of 29 March. This compares to last year (2012) when the 1st larvae were detected on 5 March and the 1st cutting was already underway, or completed, by the 1st week in April. Weevils and plants have been very slowly developing because of the cool temperatures, however, if and when the weather moderates for good, the plants and larvae will probably start developing quite rapidly. Thus, producers/consultants probably need to monitor the alfalfa fields about every 3 days. There do seem to be adequate populations of lady beetles to help with any aphids that may be present but will not help with weevils and will be wiped out by spraying.

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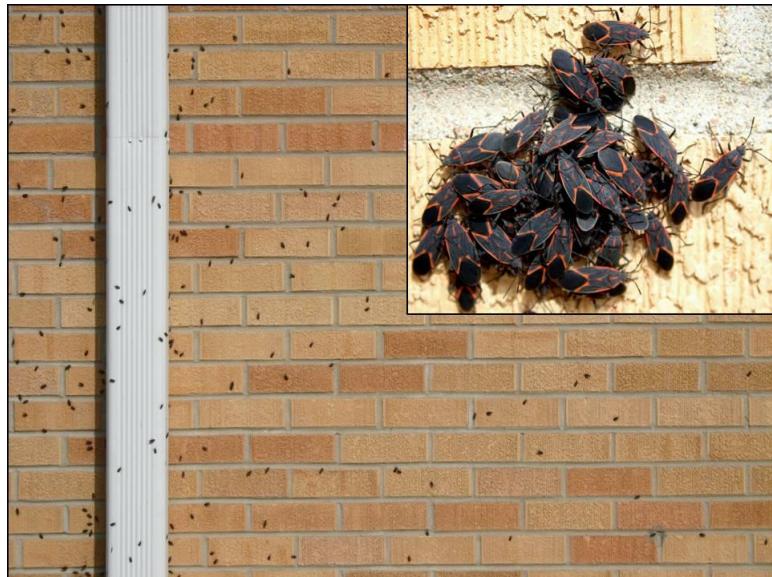
*Jeff Whitworth*

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## BITS 'n PIECES:

### Boxelder Bugs (BEB) – Where are they coming from?

Although more of an October/November/early-December topic, there have been several reports regarding the current presence of boxelder bugs around homes and buildings. This is not surprising. Last year was a banner year for boxelder bugs. The battle cry for boxelder bugs was, "They're EVERYWHERE!!! They're EVERYWHERE!!!"



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I am not aware of (cannot offer) any definitive/exact/factual reason(s) to explain the 2012 BEB population surge other than there are natural occurrences of population ebbs and flows for different insect species. Whereas there always are some localized reports of BEBs, last year's widespread appearances and numerous numbers of boxelder bugs (in Kansas and other states) provided material/stories for use in newspapers, television media and through internet/U-Tube outlets. What is not surprising are the reports of boxelder bugs activities during the warmer days of our current Spring. Simply, the tremendous populations of Boxelder bugs going into overwintering sites easily explains (the expected) numerous boxelder bugs reviving and leaving to pursue/initiate their 2013 activities.

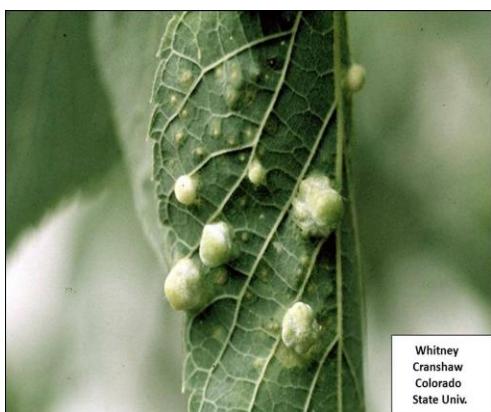
(Closely related to boxelder bugs are red-shouldered bugs.

However I have never heard reports of them invading homes and buildings like BEBs. In my experiences, they cluster beneath leaf litter and soil debris to survive winter.)



## Hackberry Nipplegall Psyllids

Another recent inquiry had to do with hackberry nipple galls. "What can I do to prevent nipplegalls?"



Credit the individual posing the question because he is thinking ahead/being proactive. His concern was twofold.



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He did not like the appearance of nipplegalls (upper left), and he wanted to prevent the Fall home invasion of the psyllids (upper right) after emerging from the nipplegalls which they initiated in the Spring.

The objection to the presence of nipplegalls is aesthetically driven. In of themselves, nipplegalls are not detrimental to overall tree health. In some instances, heavy galling may cause leaves to drop. However, being Springtime, trees will immediately produce a new flush of foliage ----- and the new leaves will be “perfect” because the nipplegall psyllids will have died after they completed their once-a-year egglaying activities.

Despite this, some individuals will still be driven to apply/spray an insecticide in an attempt to kill psyllids (thus minimizing/eliminating egglaying) and exposed nymphs (before they become enclosed and protected within galls). If attempted, sprays need to be applied when hackberry buds open and leaves unfurl and expand. This “tree event” coincides with the hackberry nipplegall psyllid’s lifecycle. The psyllids emerge from overwintering sites (any protective cover which enabled them to survive the rigors of winter) to deposit eggs on previously mentioned newly forming foliage. It is incumbent on people to closely monitor their individual trees to correctly time the insecticide application. The most commonly available insecticide products for purchase and use by homeowners contain the active ingredient carbaryl (product formulations often under the product trade name Sevin). Because mating and egglaying activities for hackberry nipplegall psyllids is cited to occur for several weeks, several weekly treatments may be required when attempting to control the formation of hackberry nipplegalls. Read the product label to ensure its proper and safe use.

If individuals are successful in suppressing gall formation on their tree(s), does this mean that they will not experience home invasions of nipplegall psyllids in the Fall? **NO!** As mentioned above with regard to Fall home invasions of boxelder bugs, the few (or many) psyllids and nymphs that an individual might kill would be comparable to the grain of sand in the Sahara Desert, or bucket of water out of the Pacific Ocean. Because of their mobility, abundant numbers of psyllids from other sources can move into/invoke the home.

## Eastern Tent Caterpillars

While (for many people) robins and bluebirds are harbingers of Spring, for entomologists (well anyway, for one entomologist, **ME!**), eastern tent caterpillars signal that Spring has arrived. Certainly our current 2013 has been a cool/late Spring compared to last year’s warm/early Spring. Utilizing accumulated Growing Day Degrees ( $\text{base}_{50}$ ) serves to illustrate the stark contrast as seen in the following table:

Location in Kansas	Through March 31, 2012	Through March 31, 2013
Northeast (Powhattan)	292.0	28.5 (263.5 behind)
Northwest (St. Francis)	120.5	15.1 (105.4 behind)
Southeast (Baxter Springs)	333.5	80.4 (253.1 behind)
Southwest (Elkhart)	210.5	45.7 (164.8 behind)
Central (Ellsworth)	278.5	46.4 (232.1 behind)
Manhattan	277.5	50.3 (227.2 behind)

Since 2002, eastern tent caterpillar egg hatch has always occurred in March. I thought that with our current cool/cold Spring, that that track record might be in jeopardy. Things looked bleak as of as March 24, with the

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snow cover and only 30.6 accumulated GDDs (commencement of ETC egg hatch cited to occur between 100-200 accumulated GDDs).



Between March 24 and 28, there were no additional accumulated GDD's. On March 29<sup>th</sup>, there were an additional 5.8. Thus when emergences were noted at noon on March 30<sup>th</sup> (indicated with the white/blue ribbons), the total accumulation was 36.4 ----- well below the minimum suggested 100-200. This does serve to illustrate that cited accumulated GDDs specified for certain insects may be imprecise. But then, precision is not intended ---- rather, just serving as guidelines to be used as a tool to signal when people might begin to scout for the presence of specific pest species.



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## Still Time To Burn Those Dead Pine Trees

Pine wilt disease (PWD) continues rampant in eastern Kansas. And it continues its sloooooow spread westward. Regardless of location in the state, the primary “attack” against PWD is to destroy dead pine trees before beetles (developing within) emerge to continue the disease cycle.

Even though so prevalent in eastern Kansas (it is there to stay), sanitation/burning is still recommended in an attempt to minimize additional/new localized incidences. Western Kansas is in a better position to stymy the spread due to low incidences of PWD coupled with an awareness of what could happen based on the eastern Kansas experience. Community awareness programs have the general populace on the lookout for “sick” trees which can then be marked/mapped for removal and destroyed/burned.

Based on emergence studies, beetle emergence began in mid-May (May 22, 2000, and May 21, 2009). Thus the time is fast approaching that the burning of dead trees be completed.



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*Bob Bauernfeind*

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**Sincerely,**

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Department of Entomology

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