

# Kansas Insect Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants and Extension Personnel



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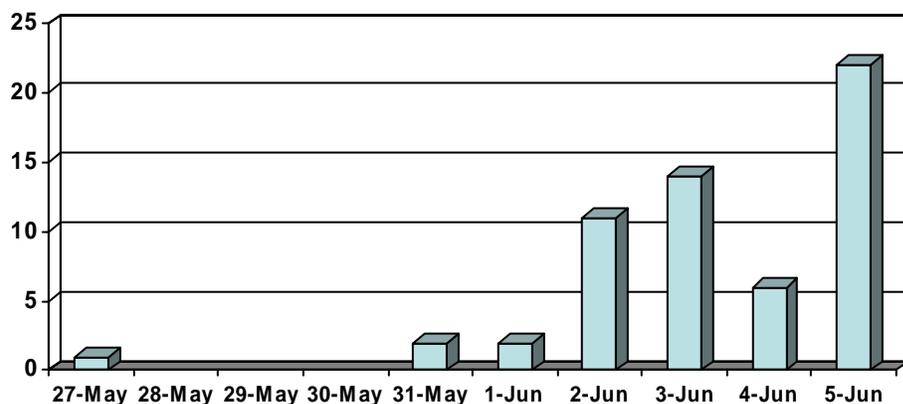
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## Corn Borer

### European Corn Borer Pheromone Trap Catch Garden City 2008



European corn borer moths were active in the Garden City area this week (see graph). This means that corn producers should begin checking fields for signs of “shothole” feeding. With many fields planted to Bt corn, corn borer is not as serious of a problem as it was several years ago, but it still deserves checking in non-Bt corn and in the refuge plantings required for Bt corn fields. European corn borer populations have been low the last few years in most areas. However, things could be interesting this year since much of the corn is delayed. Those moths that are around could concentrate in a few early planted fields and could potentially cause noticeable damage. The only way to know what is happening will be to scout fields regularly for the next few days. Southwestern corn borer has not been detected in our pheromone traps in Garden City as of June 5<sup>th</sup>. Often after a severe winter populations in the Garden City area are greatly reduced. Thus, the lack of SWCB catch so far could mean that populations were reduced by the winter conditions, or it could be that they will begin emerging in the next few days. Even if first generation populations of SWCB are low in the Garden City area this spring, that does not mean that they could not occur in damaging levels in some areas of southwest Kansas, especially in the sandier soils south of Garden City or in South Central Kansas. Again it would be good to watch susceptible fields closely for the next few days. For more information refer to our web pages: European corn borer - <http://www.entomology.ksu.edu/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=243&tabid=592>

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or Southwestern Corn Borer - <http://www.entomology.ksu.edu/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=253&tabid=597>

Phil Sloderbeck

## Pea and Cowpea Aphids in Alfalfa

We continue to receive a few calls regarding aphids in alfalfa. The aphids of concern, so far, are pea aphids, but there continues to be a small percentage of spotted and cowpea aphids also. Refer to last week's Kansas Insect Newsletter for information regarding spotted aphids: <http://www.entomology.ksu.edu/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=696>.

Pea aphids are the larger lime green (sometimes may be pinkish tinged, see photo) aphids. If viewed under magnification, they have a dark band around each antennal segment which is fairly apparent. Pea aphids are usually more noticeable in early spring but populations are still quite evident, probably due to the cooler weather and lack of lady beetles and other natural enemies. However, some of the fields sampled this past week had really good populations of lady beetle larvae and green lacewings so they should be able to rapidly reduce aphid populations. Therefore, with the advent of hot weather and the increase in beneficial insects, pea aphid populations should decline without insecticide treatment. A few aphids in alfalfa are helpful as they do provide a food source to keep beneficials in the fields which may keep other, later season, pests, i.e. spotted and cowpea aphids and potato leafhoppers below damaging levels.

Cowpea aphids are slate gray to black and are usually present in densities well below levels which will stress vigorous plants. However, in 2007 we had significant infestations. So, these aphids should be monitored to avoid a repeat of last year. The same beneficials that regulate pea aphid colonies will also help reduce cowpea aphid densities. Therefore, when scouting for alfalfa aphids, include beneficial insects in your management decision. Cowpea aphids produce considerable honeydew and this can also help to stress alfalfa, especially when molds start growing on this byproduct of the aphid feeding.

Treatment levels are approximately the same for both species so please consult our website at: <http://www.entomology.ksu.edu/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=183&tabid=399>





Jeff Whitworth

Holly Davis

## Ants vs. Termites

The diagnostic lab has been receiving several samples of winged termites over the last few weeks. Thus on our diagnostic lab news web site the featured arthropod currently devoted to winged ants and termites - <http://www.entomology.ksu.edu/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=669>

Holly Davis

## Defoliating Caterpillars:

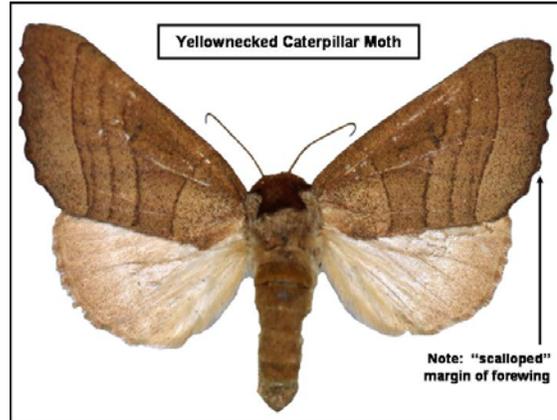
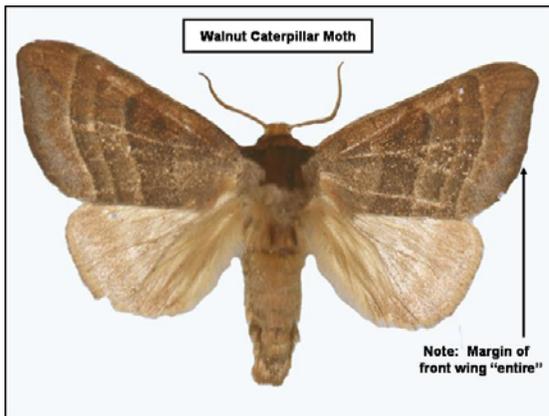
Homeowners occasionally face anxious moments when they discover that their trees have suddenly (seemingly overnight) been defoliated. Their assumption is that during the night, marauding caterpillars suddenly appeared out-of-nowhere and stripped the leaves. In actuality, the caterpillars had been present for 5-6 weeks. During this period, noticeable damage was not evident due to the small size of the caterpillars and the “nibble-sized bites” that sustained them. However, during the final days of their feeding cycle, the large larvae voraciously “gobble-up” any and all foliage to satiate their feeding requirements. This accounts for the aforementioned “overnight disappearance” of foliage.

While there are several butterfly species whose larvae are defoliators, by far, the majority of defoliating caterpillars are associated with moths. Because most moth species are active at night, they are captured in blacklight traps. Thus detected, approximate projections can be made as to periods of larval activity. Currently, two “cousin” species

are being recovered from blacklight traps: walnut caterpillar moths and yellownecked caterpillar moths. At quick glance by most casual observers, these moths might appear to be one-in-the-same. However they can be easily differentiated by examining the margins of their forewings:

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Although there are overlaps in trees species that are "attacked", walnut caterpillars have a somewhat restricted preferred host range (walnut, pecan, hickory) whereas yellownecked caterpillars are associated with a greater variety of fruit and shade trees (apple, peach, cherry, crabapple, elm, maple, oak, birch and locust). Literature indicates that the yellownecked caterpillar produces but a single generation/year whereas walnut caterpillars produce 2 generations. This has not been worked out for Kansas although there is little reason to suspect this not to be the case.

So does knowing that these moths are currently active tell where the caterpillars will appear? **NO! One cannot predict where they eventually show up in damaging numbers!** The operative words here are "**damaging numbers**". It may be that in most years, many trees serve as host to low numbers of these caterpillars. But because of those low numbers and (thus) the absence of noticeable damage, they are oblivious and complete their cycle unseen/unknown. Only in "outbreak" situations do they come to our attention. And at that point, **THERE IS NOTHING TO BE GAINED BY APPLYING INSECTICIDE TREATMENTS** because most caterpillars have neared the end of (if not already have completed) their feeding cycle and may have left to seek protected sites in preparation for overwintering. The best news is that although current-season foliage has been destroyed, next year's buds are not damaged, and trees will fully leaf out the following spring. The following images substantiate this statement.



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## Weekly Report from the Kansas State University Insect Diagnostic Laboratory:

The following samples were submitted to the Insect Diagnostician Laboratory from May 30<sup>th</sup> to June 5<sup>th</sup>.

- May 30 2008: Harvey County – Lone star tick – nymph
- May 30 2008: Atchison County – Springtails – outdoors
- May 30 2008: Riley County – Springtails – indoors
- May 30 2008: Riley County – Dermestid beetle
- May 30 2008: Riley County – Lone star tick – nymph
- June 02 2008: Riley County – Ash borer longhorned beetle
- June 02 2008: Pottawatomie County – Red-legged purse-web spider
- June 03 2008: Shawnee County – Lone star tick - engorged adult female
- June 04 2008: Sherman County – Carpenter ants in home
- June 05 2008: Atchison County – Confused flour beetles in kitchen

If there are any questions regarding these samples or about the identification of any arthropod please contact the Insect Diagnostician at (785) 532-4739 or [GotBugs@ksu.edu](mailto:GotBugs@ksu.edu).

*Holly Davis*

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**Sincerely,**

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