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Kansas Insect Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants, and Extension Personnel

Department of Entomology
239 West Waters Hall
K-State Research and Extension
Manhattan, KS 66506-4027

Tel: 785-532-5891
Fax: 785-532-6258

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2007 ACCUMULATED GDDs FOR KANSAS

As expected, accumulated GDDs have rapidly built with warmer daytime and nighttime temperatures. The **March 1 – 28** totals are: Baxter Springs – 240, Clyde – 149, El Dorado – 191.5, Elkhart – 143.5, Ellsworth – 179.5, Emporia – 189, Garden City – 139.5, Hays – 131.5, Hiawatha – 145.5, Hutchinson – 195, Independence – 242.5, Kansas City – 164, Lawrence – 165, Manhattan – 165, Newton – 182.5, Olathe – 173.5, Pittsburg – 237, St. Francis – 77, Salina – 179.5, Topeka – 184 and Wichita – 204.

Eastern tent caterpillar are (at least) into their second week of development (March 16 observed hatch in the Manhattan area). Web masses are more readily apparent and can easily be removed by using your fingers or a stick-like object to collect the "tent". Remove during daylight hours when larvae are congregated/resting after their evening foraging activities. Numerous insecticidal products are available at local retail outlets if that is the preferred control method. Treat only the foliage and branches adjacent to the web masses --- this is the immediate foraging area for the caterpillars.

Eastern tent caterpillar - 2-week old tent

European pine sawfly hatch was observed on Friday, March 23 in Manhattan. Newly hatched larvae form clusters around individual needles. Small larvae prefer nibbling the succulent needle tissues, leaving behind needle veins which wither and turn brown. Removal/pruning of infested terminals is one method of eliminating sawfly larvae. If insecticide treatments are preferred, small larvae can easily be controlled with a wide

array of synthetic insecticides as well as horticultural oils and soaps. Apply sprays directly to clustered larvae.

European Pine Sawfly - Clustered Larvae

European Pine Sawfly - Withered needles

May beetles/June beetles have begun their evening flights. Evening walks after sunset (and as it becomes dark) are often accompanied by a buzzing noise passing one's ear. Or, beetles may announce their presence by landing on arms, clothing or in the hair. While this may startle walkers, May/June beetles are harmless. A curious person might collect a handful of beetles and be surprised to see that they vary in size, color, sheen and "hairiness". A common reaction among people at this time of year is to rush out to purchase and apply "grub treatments" to lawns. May/June beetle grubs **ARE NOT** the "annual grubs" responsible for causing the late fall damage to turf. Occasionally, May/June beetles may feed and cause springtime defoliation of broadleaf trees ---- but even this is of no consequence because trees rapidly re-leaf to restore their normal appearance.

May/June beetles

Bob Bauernfeind

Alfalfa Weevil

Alfalfa weevils, as most of you know by now, are extremely active throughout the state. The first calls started coming in from south-central Kansas 2 weeks ago. This is about 3-4 weeks earlier than normal. The unusually mild conditions evidently caused the eggs to hatch and larval development to proceed at a very rapid pace. Samples taken on 28 March, from fields in central Kansas indicated 60% of the larvae were already in the 2nd instar and about 20% in the 3rd instar. The others were 1st instars. From a practical standpoint, this means the majority of the feeding will occur over the next 10-14 days, if the mild weather conditions continue.

Because of wet weather much needed insecticide applications are being delayed. So the question is, if fields are too wet to treat for another week and the majority of the feeding and consequent damage is done soon after, will it pay to treat? Certainly in the northern part of the state, generally north of Highway 36, it would probably still be worthwhile. But, this needs to be considered in central and southern Kansas because larval

development is proceeding rapidly. One consideration, when scouting for weevils during the 1st week or two of April, be sure to watch for pupae. If you are starting to find pupae and most of the worms are large, robust and maybe even a little sluggish, that probably means feeding activity is about to end, naturally, so you will not help the situation by insecticide application. Also, the alfalfa is growing rapidly, so it may be prudent to harvest a little early instead of treating. If you do treat, please pay close attention to the pre-harvest interval for the insecticide used.

Also, in examining the samples from central Kansas taken this week, we could find no adults (we did sweep net sampling) nor any eggs in stems. This was a small sample but hopefully, if indicative for other parts of the state, it may mean that we'll not have another "flush" of egg-hatching and thus more damage. So please keep sampling and, it sounds crazy, hope for a little dry weather.

Jeff Whitworth

Termite Preswarmers

Termite reproductives, i.e. swarmers, were found in wood in an infested garage. They hadn't actually started leaving the nest area or swarming yet but they obviously are getting ready. This swarming behavior generally occurs anytime from February-May depending upon weather conditions. Swarming activity usually follows "warm" spring rains which we are currently experiencing throughout the state. The most common question concerning these swarmers is how to distinguish them from ants which can also produce these winged reproductives and may swarm at about the same time. Termite swarmers can be distinguished from ant swarmers relatively easily. Termites have straight antennae; ants have bent or elbowed antennae; termite wings are of essentially the same size and naturally fall off after a short fluttering flight; ants have forewings a little larger than their hind wings; termites have no constriction between their thorax and abdomen i.e. they have no waist, they are more cigar-shaped; ants have a constriction between the thorax and abdomen i.e. they have a fairly obvious waist. If swarming activity is noted you probably need to call a pest control professional for an inspection to determine if the colony is affecting any wooden structures and if so, for treatment options.

Jeff Whitworth, Phil Sloderbeck, Sharon Dobesh

Sincerely,

Robert J. Bauernfeind
Extension Specialist
Horticultural Entomology

Jeff Whitworth
Extension Specialist
Entomology (Crops)

Phil Sloderbeck
Southwest Research and Extension Center
Entomology - Garden City, KS

Sharon Dobesh
Pesticide & IPM Coordinator