Kansas Insect Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants and Extension Personnel

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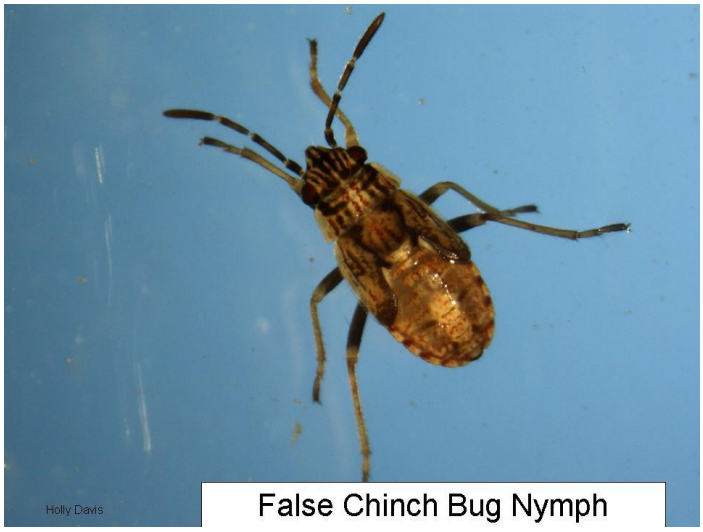
June 24, 2010 No. 11

False Chinch Bugs

We have received several reports regarding false chinch bugs feeding on young soybeans in southeast Kansas. This occurs every year, usually in southeast or central KS, but not to the extent that it is happening this year. False chinch bugs have a wide host range and generally feed on different species of weeds, only moving into crops after the weeds die. Most frequently they are found in border areas or in spots in the field where weeds were growing and usually in fields with some residue. False chinch bugs may be very numerous, i.e. 100's/ft^2, as nymphs and thus can cause serious stress to young plants by the sheer volume of juice they suck from the plant (see photo). We have never had the occasion to test insecticides against this pest as we have never seen large areas with enough bugs to adequately run an insecticide trial. However, reports from a couple of applicators this year that apparently have large areas of fields severely infested indicate they are getting good control with pyrethroid insecticides labeled for use in soybeans.



False Chinch Bug Nymph

Japanese Beetles

Reports indicate Japanese beetles are moving into corn and soybean fields in eastern Kansas. Make sure the identification is correct as we get several calls every year about Japanese beetles that turn out to green June beetles, which look somewhat similar but larger, don't have the metallic maroon back, and do not have the characteristic white tufts along their sides (see photos). Japanese beetles will feed on just about any vegetation but corn and soybeans are the agricultural crops most commonly affected There is really no established threshold but remember, soybeans can withstand considerable defoliation during the vegetative stages and Japanese beetles usually occur in patchy areas rather than field wide. However, they are voracious feeders and will continue to feed for 30 - 60 days with a few days off here and there to lay eggs.

Jeff Whitworth *Holly Davis*

Snake skins? Ant tubes? Or what? ……. Buffalograss webworms

In July, 2003, I received a phone call (from Pratt, KS) regarding what looked like snake skins littering bare ground. Fast forward to earlier this week when Mark Ploger (Pratt Co. CEA-ANR) called to inquire about "something strange" (maybe ant related?) occurring in Pratt. In both instances, what was/is being encountered were/are surface feeding tubes of buffalograss webworms. Kansas is "home" to the premier research on this insect first identified/described as a turf pest by Dr. K. A. Sorensen in his 1968 M. S. dissertation entitled, The Habits and Life History of a Pyralid Moth, *Surattha identella* Kearfott, Attacking Buffalograss in Kansas. (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae).

This insect has a restricted distribution (Figure 1 – from dissertation) in comparison to the usual species in the genus *Crambus* which constitute the more familiar sod webworms which are distributed throughout the United States. In an initial distribution survey which included 36 counties, buffalograss webworms were documented from Barber, Barton, Edwards, Ellsworth, Kingman, Meade, Pawnee, Pratt, Rice and Stafford Counties. It is most certain that they occur in additional counties not included in the initial survey, as was in a personal communication reporting them from Ford County.

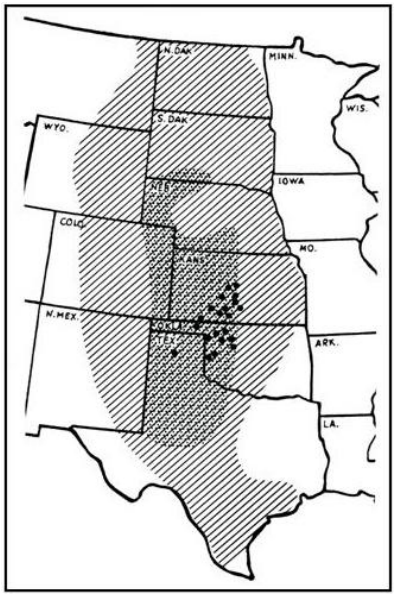


Figure 1

Despite its name, buffalograss webworms also feed on bermudagrass, and (as reported by Sorensen) will damage bentgrass greens.

In common with "typical/traditional" sod webworms are silken surface tubes which are encrusted with particles of dirt/frass/grass blades and stems and other surface debris. However, if one scrapes away the tubes, holes will appear in the soil surface (Figure 2). These are the entryways to silk-lined vertical tubes in the soil in which buffalograss webworms (during daytime) feed on grass that they harvested and stored during the previous night's foraging foray. This is in contrast to other sodworm species which **do not** create vertical tubes but remain in and feed within their surface tubes.

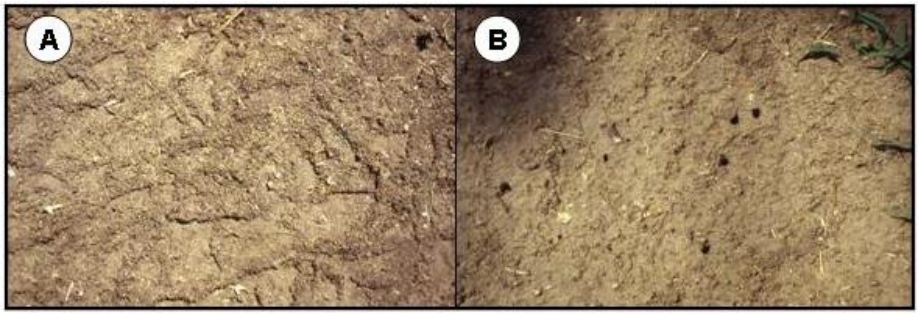


Figure 2

Buffalograss webworms are often first detected at the beginning of summer when something appears amiss. Typically a site will have visibly green grass bordered by an off-colored area (Figure 3). The yellow arrows point to the direction of the movement of the webworms.

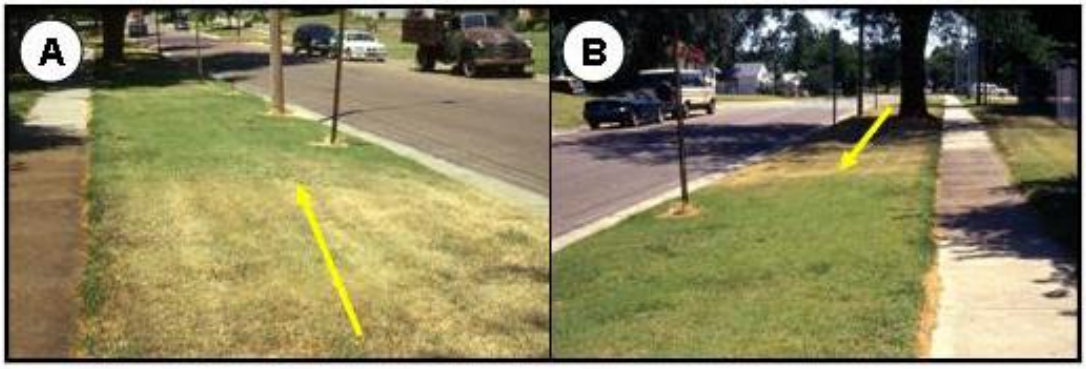


Figure 3

For individuals who do not detect early problem areas, they are jolted into reality when BARE GROUND captures their attention (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Buffalograss webworms produce a single generation per year. As per Sorensen: Moths appear from August through September. Eggs are individually deposited in barren areas. The female moth thrusts her stout ovipositor ¼ to ½ inch into the soil and deposits a single egg. The number of eggs per female averaged 83. After an incubation period averaging 12 days, larvae emerge but do not feed ----- rather, constructing a hibernaculum in which to overwinter. Larvae initiate feeding activities the following in mid- to late April, a time coinciding with the initiation of growth for the of the warm-season grass host. Larvae feed and develop throughout summer. Pupation begins in late July and extends to the end of September. Moths (again) begin appearing in August to repeat the cycle.

There probably are buffalograss webworms present year in and year out. However, sporadic outbreaks in certain years bring them to the forefront. High populations coupled with hot and dry conditions result in the appearance of bare areas which will then require renovations/restoration of grassy areas.

Although there are no specific control recommendations on-the-books, measures can be taken to stop the advance of buffalograss webworms. As seen in Figure 5A & B, larvae are well protected (from direct contact with insecticides) within their silk-lined tubes. While you will not find them fully exposed as shown in 5C, they will, of course, poke their heads out to clip grass blades as they forage during the night. Knowing this, a person can apply an insecticide treatment to the "healthy" grass which abuts damaged areas. That grass is next-in-line to be harvested during the ensuing night's foraging period. Thus contact with insecticides as they forage and/or the eventual consumption of treated foliage will cause mortality.

Figure 5

Currently in Kansas, there are no products specifically registered for use against buffalograss webworms. However, for sod webworms "in general", there are 1,084 registered products. One must visit local retail outlets and look at the product to see which have registered uses against sod webworms.

Bob Bauernfeind

Report from the Kansas State University Insect Diagnostic Laboratory:

The following samples were submitted to the Insect Diagnostic Laboratory from June 17th to June 23rd.

June 17 2011 – Coffey County – Millipedes around home
June 17 2011 – County – Oriental cockroaches in basement
June 17 2011 – Butler County – Grape colaspis in garden
June 20 2011 – Shawnee County – Possible Northern black widow
June 20 2011 – Lyon County – Carpet beetle larvae in home
June 22 2011 –Saline County – Spruce spider mites
June 22 2011 –Norton County – Lecanium scale on hackberry
June 22 2011 – Jackson County – Spider mites on Mandevilla
June 23 2011 – Anderson County – Red legged purseweb spider

June 23 2011 – Sherman County – Southern pine coneworm in pine cones
June 23 2011 – Sumner County – Camel cricket in lawn

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.

Holly Davis

Sincerely,

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