

## Looking for Wireworm infested fields

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Wireworms, the soil-dwelling larvae of click beetles, inflict damage to many important crops around the world, primarily through the subterranean feeding on plant roots and tubers.

Wireworms are known to cause serious damage to wheat and barley in the Golden Triangle area of Montana, and in other areas of the Northern Great Plains (Montana, North and South Dakota, and Minnesota). This pest can attack both spring and fall-seeded crops, and feed on seeds and seedlings.

In recent years, wireworm damage has become an increasing problem for Montana growers. Significant losses in crop yield, quality and marketability have incurred. Due to the cryptic habitat of wireworms, control of these pests is very difficult. Montana farmers have tended to control wireworms primarily with insecticides. Historically, using insecticides to control wireworms has proven to be problematic.

Beginning in the 1950s, wireworm populations were suppressed by conventional insecticides, such as Lindane, to a low pest status for nearly 40 years. The resurgence of wireworms

can be attributed in large part to the recent removal of highly toxic conventional insecticides that were used to control them, and the ineffectiveness of their second-generation replacements.

Western Triangle Ag. Research Center has been working on the development of control methods for wireworms. This project comprises three major objectives through the testing of:

1. insect pathogens
2. low risk insecticides
3. trap crops.

This project has been funded by the Montana Wheat and Barley Committee. Also, the research center has hired Dr. Anamika Sharma, a postdoctoral research associate and Raman-deep Kaur, a graduate student to work specifically on this project.

The research center is also looking for plots that have wireworms so that they can collect them by installing stocking traps and have field experiments.

Growers are encouraged to contact the research center at 406-278-7707; the contact people are John Miller, [jhmiller@montana.edu](mailto:jhmiller@montana.edu) or Gadi V.P. Reddy, at [reddy@montana.edu](mailto:reddy@montana.edu).

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