

# Army Cutworm

## *Euxoa auxiliaris*

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| <i>Order:</i>         | Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies)       |
| <i>Family:</i>        | Noctuidae (noctuid moths)                 |
| <i>Metamorphosis:</i> | Complete (egg-larva-pupa-adult)           |
| <i>Mouthparts:</i>    | Chewing in larvae and siphoning in adults |



Larva of **ARMY CUTWORM**, *Euxoa auxiliaris*, see color print, Fig. 9, on publication B-1013.

Army cutworms and other cutworms cut into the stems of plants. They are native to Wyoming. Severe damage to young fields of wheat, oats, alfalfa, and corn can occur. Once a stand is well established, cutworm activity is less problematic. The moths are often called “millers.”

### Body Form

*Eggs:* Eggs are small and oval (approximately 1/64 inch) and yellow white in color. They turn darker just prior to hatching.

*Larvae:* Larvae are dark with different patterns of gray and brown running down the length of the abdomen in striped patterns. Mature larvae are approximately 1¼ inches in length. There are three pairs of true legs near the head and five pairs of fleshy prolegs. One pair of prolegs is located near the anus and the rest along the length of the body.

*Pupae:* Pupae are dark brown. There are no protrusions extending from the pupal case. They are found within cracks and crevices of the soil.

*Adults:* Moths have a wingspan of approximately 1½ inches. When at rest, the wings are folded over the abdomen. The forewing is grayish brown with white and silver markings. A distinct kidney bean-shaped marking is present in the upper-middle part of the forewings.

### Life History

Army cutworms overwinter as half-grown larvae in grain and hay fields. Larvae complete their development in spring and pupate as summer approaches. Emerging adults oversummer in higher altitudes. They migrate back to grain fields in the fall when females lay eggs in the soil. After hatching, larvae feed on young tender stems. There is one generation per year in the region. Occasionally, populations increase to outbreak proportions.

## **Plant Injury**

Poor stands may occur as a result of larvae cutting through the stems of young plants. Damage is often spotty in a field. In outbreak years, severe damage may result in reduced yields of wheat, oats, alfalfa, and corn.

## **Management**

Larvae feed during the night and are difficult to detect during the day. The lengths of plants cut along a row or adjacent rows are indicators of cutworm activity. If cutworms are not visible on the soil surface, inspect the field at night with a flashlight where damage is occurring. Because damage often occurs sporadically, spot treatments of insecticide may be sufficient to control a population. During outbreak years, more extensive use of insecticide may be appropriate.

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