Montana small grain insects

Beneficial Insects

Many kinds of beneficial insects are found in Montana crops. They help prevent outbreaks of pest insects.

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Lady Beetles

Ladybugs feed on aphids and other soft bodied insects. Adults lay clusters of orange eggs on plants. Eggs hatch into larvae which also are predaceous. Fully grown larvae change into pupae which produce adults.

Ladybeetle eggs

Syrphid fly

Syrphid fly maggots attack aphids and other small insects. They are common when wheat heads are filling. Adults are bee-like flies.

Larva with aphid

Damsel bug

Damsel bug nymphs and adults attack aphids, small caterpillars, and other insects. They are common in wheat and alfalfa.

Larva with aphid

Aphid parasites

Aphid parasites are tiny wasps. Dead aphids are brown and sometimes called "mummies" because they are brown and paper-like. Parasites reproduce rapidly and can quickly bring aphid outbreaks under control.

Aphid mummies

Green lacewings

Green lacewing adults lay eggs on slender stalks which protect them from other larvae. Larvae feed on aphids and other insects.

Eggs

Adult

Larva with aphid

Some Concepts:

- Beneficial insects may move between crops.
- Alfalfa is an excellent source of beneficials.
- Use caution when purchasing beneficial insects from other states.
- Insecticide treatments may kill beneficial insects and result in further outbreaks of insect pests.
- Many kinds of beneficial insects occur naturally, and help suppress pest insects.