

Armyworm outbreaks occur only occasionally because they have many natural enemies that usually prevent the development of economically significant infestations. Because of the sporadic and unpredictable nature of armyworm outbreaks, management is limited to insecticides. Local information on the relative effectiveness of insecticides is not available. Base your product selection on local applicator experience and relative cost.

Consider treating armyworm infestations if **all** of the following conditions are met:

1. larval counts exceed the appropriate level in Table 3;
2. worms are 0.75 to 1.25 inches long;
3. most larvae are not parasitized (look for white eggs behind the head or small brown cocoons attached to the body); and
4. leaf feeding or head clipping is evident.

Table 3: Guidelines for treatment for armyworm.

Crop Condition	Treat if Larvae Exceed
Preheading – defoliation in lower leaves	5 per square foot
Headed – head clipping	2 per square foot

Wheat Head Armyworm

Field Biology. Little is known about the life history of this insect. It spends the winter as a pupa in the soil. Moths emerge to lay eggs in the spring, and larvae (Figure 4) can be found in wheat in June. First generation larvae feed on the heads of wheat at night and hide near the base of the plant during the day. Damage to grain is similar in appearance to that caused by weevils in stored grain. Pupation occurs again in the soil, and a second moth flight occurs in late August. Colorado State University light trap catches indicate that two generations per year occur in Colorado.

Host Plants. Wheat head armyworm feeds on a variety of grasses and cereal crops and seems to prefer the heads. Timothy is considered to be a preferred host.

Distribution. Wheat head armyworm is found throughout the United States, as far west as Utah and Arizona. It is found in most wheat-producing areas of Colorado but is considered to be of minor importance.

Scouting and Treatment. Use a sweep net to sample for wheat head armyworm.



Figure 4: Wheat head armyworm (variable in color).

No chemical control data or economic threshold studies are available for this insect. Infestations often are limited to field margins. If an outbreak occurs, any registered contact insecticide should be effective against this insect.

Insecticides labeled for the control of these pests can be found in the most recent version of the **High Plains Integrated Pest Management Guide for Colorado, Montana, Western Nebraska and Wyoming**, which is available from Extension in any of these states.