

Damage

Caterpillars feed on leaves, flowers and fruit. They chew large holes in leaves and can cause extensive damage. Significant damage occurs to crops in June and July and in late September – early October.



Western yellowstriped armyworm damage to beet, tomato and hosta.



What you can do

Armyworms can move in large numbers and can cause damage to ornamental plants, vegetable and flower gardens. Beneficial insects, viruses and birds provide some control of armyworms.

- Control weeds in the spring to reduce egg-laying sites for female moths and food sources for larvae.
- Cover plants with insect net (reemay, floating row covers) or screened cages.
- Trap larvae under blankets laid on the ground. Kill trapped larvae in buckets of soapy or salty water.
- Handpick caterpillars and dispose of in a bucket of soapy or salty water.
- Till up soil in the fall to help destroy overwintering pupae.
- Domestic insecticides registered for caterpillar control include Btk (*Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki*), Diatomaceous earth, Malathion and Ambush.
- For best control, apply Btk to small larvae (less than 2 cm). Btk is not toxic to bees.
- Malathion and Ambush are highly toxic to bees. DO NOT use these products when bees are foraging. Read and follow label instructions.

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Controlling Armyworms in Home Gardens



Western yellowstriped armyworm caterpillar

Western Yellowstriped Armyworm

(*Spodoptera praefica*)



Introduction

Western yellowstriped armyworm was first detected in the North Okanagan valley of British Columbia in Enderby, Armstrong and Spallumcheen in July 2018. Thousands of caterpillars moved into crops causing extensive damage to vegetable and flower gardens, ornamentals and alfalfa.

Armyworms have a tendency to move (march) in large numbers hence the name. Apart from attacking crops, they can be a nuisance and very unpleasant when they try to get into homes and climb on buildings.

Report sightings of Western yellowstriped armyworms and damage in new regions to the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture offices or contacts below:

- Susanna Acheampong, Ministry of Agriculture, Kelowna at Susannana.Acheampong@gov.bc.ca or (250) 861-7681 or
- AgriService BC, Telephone: 1 888 221-7141 Email: AgriServiceBC@gov.bc.ca



Western yellowstriped armyworm caterpillar feeding on scentless chamomile.

Hosts

Western yellowstriped armyworm feeds on more than 60 different plant species including vegetables, berries, grapes, ornamental plants and weeds.

Identification

Western yellowstriped armyworm adults are brown moths, about 1.5 cm long with light yellow and dark brown markings. Larvae are black with distinct pale yellow stripes on each side of the body, up to 5 cm long and the front of the head has an inverted “Y” marking. The pupal stage is reddish brown.

Life Cycle

Moths fly from March - May and females lay clusters of eggs on upper leaf surfaces. Eggs hatch in 3-6 days. Caterpillars (larvae) feed for 2-3 weeks. Larvae dig about 5 cm deep into the soil to pupate in June. Moths emerge in 2 weeks. The entire life cycle takes about 4-6 weeks. There may be 3-4 cycles per year. Moths fly at night and mating and egg-laying occur between dusk and midnight.



Western yellowstriped armyworm caterpillar digging a hole in the soil to pupate.



Top to bottom: Western yellowstriped armyworm moth, larvae and pupa. Note inverted “Y” on the head of the larva.