

How to manage...

Fall armyworm



1. Egg mass



2. Young caterpillars



3. Caterpillar with y on head



4. Adult moth



5. Caterpillar damage

The Fall Armyworm caterpillar causes severe damage to over 80 plant species including maize, rice and pastures by feeding on leaves, fruits and grains.

PREVENT

- Sow at the onset of rains to avoid peak immigration of adults
- Plant your crops at the same time – avoid having plots of different ages
- Conserve beneficial insects which kill the armyworms by preserving weeds and flowering plants on the edges of your plot
- Intercrop maize with crops such as cassava or yam, which are not attacked by the Fall armyworm

ACT

- Handpick and destroy egg masses and caterpillars.
- Spray with:
 - Neem-based products
 - Biopesticide *Bacillus thuringiensis* varieties in the late afternoon
 - If you use chemical pesticides seek advice on which to use from your Agricultural Extension Officer

Spray into the whorl. Ensure you wear long sleeves and trousers along with a mask, goggles, gloves and boots while spraying because chemical pesticides can be toxic.

Avoid spraying pesticides early in the crop cycle as this will kill natural enemies that control the pest, and may not be economical.

MONITOR

Check your crops weekly once they have emerged for signs of damage.

Eggs: Look for egg masses on the undersides of the leaves (picture 1).

Caterpillars: Look for caterpillars on the undersides of leaves and the whorl. They are light green to dark brown with stripes down their bodies.

Large caterpillars have an upside down pale Y-shaped marking on the front (picture 3) and their second-to-last body segment has four dark spots in a square shape.

Damage: Look for small light coloured patches and large ragged, elongated holes on the leaves, emerging from the whorl (picture 5).

- Note how many plants in 100 are recently damaged.
- Consider taking control measures if more than 20 whorls are damaged and caterpillars can be found on plants.

Picture 4 (Adult moth) © Matt Bertone. All others © D Van Heerden.