**Corn Earworm**

Losses from Corn earworm (CEW) have been estimated as high as 7% and populations may reach economic infestations of 35 million acres across the entire United States. Between the difficulty of effectively controlling CEW with insecticides and the damage generally being overlooked until harvest, many farmers have elected to accept the lost yield potential. New tools are becoming available to combat CEW and help protect yield potential.

**Life Cycle**

There are usually two generations in much of the Midwest. CEW migrate in from the south with winds and storms from southern states. Moths typically lay eggs in corn and other host crops. The first generation larval stage feeds in the whorl of corn and other food sources although first generation damage is generally minimal.

First generation moths lay eggs on corn silks. Larvae travel down silks within one hour of hatching. Larvae feed on kernels for the most of the larval stage.

**Identification**

Larvae of CEW, fall armyworm (FAW), and western bean cutworm (WBC) are often mistaken for each other (Figure 1). Accurately identifying them is critical to manage them appropriately.

CEW larvae are light green to dark brown, usually have an orange head capsule, and 3 to 4 stripes across their body length. WBC larvae are tan with a darker, faint diamond-shaped pattern on their back, and dark stripes immediately behind their head. Larvae turn pinkish tan or pale brown as they mature. FAW have an inverted Y on their head capsule, and vary from light tan or green to almost black.

**Management**

Planting early can help avoid peak moth flights. Corn with tight husks will be a farmer’s best option for reducing kernel damage, which can potentially reduce mycotoxin contamination and increase yield potential.


**Figure 1. Larvae commonly mistaken for each other.**

**Figure 2.** (A) CEW feeding damage and ear mold. (B) Ear with the technology in the Genuity™ SmartStax™ trait which helps protect against CEW on left, and without on right.

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