

Alfalfa Weevil on the Rise

If you grow alfalfa you will want to be on the lookout for the Alfalfa weevil. We recently received an Extension Agronomy update noting “alfalfa weevil populations seem to have “exploded” around north central Kansas in the past week.” I am also seeing alfalfa weevils in Northern Butler County within the past week.

If you have noticed damage to the alfalfa leaves, I highly recommend taking a look at your stand and taking a sample. Eggs are laid inside the alfalfa stems in the fall and spring. Larvae feed on the terminal and upper leaves of the plant in early spring, reaching a quarter-inch in length in about three weeks. Most damage occurs before the first cutting, however, failure to obtain adequate control of the larvae can result in adult populations that ‘bark’ the stalks after cutting, impeding growth and even killing plants.

To sample using the “shake bucket” method, take a random sample of plants then quickly and vigorously shake them into a small bucket. Next, count the number of dislodged larvae in the bucket and divide by the number of stems to get the infestation level. An example is, 15 larvae from 10 stems = an average of 1.5 larvae/stem. Take several samples throughout the field to get a good indication of the alfalfa weevil infestation level and the stage of development of the weevils.

With the infestation we are already seeing, it may be prudent to treat fields as soon as possible. There are a number of insecticide options available to treat for the weevil.

The Alfalfa Insect Management publication can be picked up in our office, found on our website at www.butler.ksu.edu or by going to: <https://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/mf809.pdf>.

