



Don't confuse western bean cutworm with other moths

by Marlin E. Rice, Department of Entomology

Western bean cutworm adults have not yet started to fly in Iowa, but there may be some confusion over misidentification of other moths that are now flying. Several species are now being collected in Ames, and if you are unfamiliar with the western bean cutworm, then these moths may present challenges for proper identification. The most commonly collected moths during the second week of June were armyworm, yellowstriped armyworm, and spotted cutworm. A brief description of these three species and the western bean cutworm follow:

Armyworm

Forewing pale buff; a small white spot, often with small dark markings on either side on back half of wing. Larvae feed on grasses, small grains, and corn. This insect gets its name of armyworm because at times the larvae migrate in "armies" from small grains in tremendous numbers. There are three generations a year.



Armyworm, *Pseudaletia unipuncta* or *Mythimna unipuncta*. (Marlin E. Rice)

Spotted cutworm

Forewing purplish brown; a prominent, pinkish, triangular marking along middle section of wing edge. Larvae feed on vegetables, deciduous trees, small fruits, and cereal crops. There are two generations a year.



Spotted cutworm, *Xestia dolosa*. (Marlin E. Rice)

Yellowstriped armyworm

Forewing a riotous mixture of buff, tan, brown, black, and white; short white, broken bar near tip of wing; long, teardrop-shaped spot near base of wing.



Yellowstriped armyworm, *Spodoptera ornithogalli*. (Marlin E. Rice)

Larvae are general feeders and hosts include alfalfa, clover, corn and grass. There are two or three generations a year.

Western bean cutworm

Forewing a mixture of buff, tan, and gray with a cream-colored bar extending four-fifths the length of the wing along the front edge; two spots in the shape of a "full moon" and a "boomerang" touching the cream-colored bar near the mid-length of the wing. Larvae are pests of corn and dry beans. There is one generation a year.



Western bean cutworm, *Striacosta albicosta*. (Marlin E. Rice)

Based on historical trap captures, western bean cutworms would not be expected in either pheromone or light traps until the last week of June in Iowa. Table 1 shows the first, peak, and last captures of adult western bean cutworms during the previous five years.

Table 1. Five-year blacklight captures of western bean cutworm adults from Woodbury Co., Iowa, 2002–2006.

Year	Western Bean Cutworm Adults			
	First Capture	Peak Capture	Last Capture	Total
2002	June 28	July 13	August 11	12,739
2003	July 10	August 1	August 17	244
2004	July 5	July 23	August 10	531
2005	June 28	July 13	August 10	1,328
2006	June 24	July 15	August 14	1,183

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