Corn Pest and Management

EARWORM

Introduction:

Corn Earworm (*Helicoverpa armigera* (Hubner)) are moderately hairy larvae that have varied colors from yellow, to green, to red to brownish black. They may be found feeding in the ear tips following silking. (*entomology.ca.uky.edu)*

Other Names:

- Tomato fruitworm
- Tobacco budworm
- Cotton bollworm
- Sorghum headworm

Local Name:

- Ulod sa Puso (Cebuano)
- Tigre (Tagalog)

Pest Description:

1. Eggs (Incubation period is 2-5 days)

- Laid singly on the leaf whorl of young plants or corn silk of the more mature plants. The eggs are cream-colored and turn dark when about to hatch.

About to hatch egg (left). Photo by QLD Government.

2. Larva (Molts 6 times within 12-24 days)

- Newly hatched are pale yellowish white, about 4mm long. Color varies from pale green to dark brown as it matures.

Larva (Photo Credit: J. Obermeyer)

3. Pupa (Pupal period 12-24 days which takes usually in the soil)

- Yellowish green when newly pupated; turns dark brown as it matures.

Pupa (Photo Credit: Todd Gilligan, LepIntercept

4. Adult (Total development from egg to adult is 34-45 days)

- Males have dark centered circular spot in the middle of forewings.
- Females may lay 200 - 2000 eggs.

(Photo credit: Christi Jaeger)

Destructive stages of Earworm:

All larval stages. They affect early the corn's whorl to maturity growth stages.

Alternative Hosts:

Sorghum, soybean, peanut, tobacco, cotton, cowpea, tomato, okra, pechay, rose, radish, lettuce, castor, cucurbits, eggplant, garlic, onions, potato and crucifers.

Pest Management Recommendations:

Cultural Methods:

- Avoid planting other crops (e.g. peas, beans, chili, tomato) which may serve as host to corn earworm near the cornfield.
- Practice proper field sanitation.
- Practice synchronous planting (planting the same crop at the same time with neighbors).
- Use trap crops like marigold to attract pests from nearby crops.
- Use resistant varieties with long and tight ear husk.

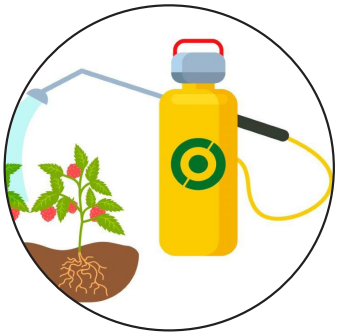
Marigold is a potential trap crop which is used in various agricultural crops like tomato.

Biological Control:

- Use entomopathogenic fungi. These are microorganisms that specifically infect and often kill insects and other arthropods.

Chemical Control:

- Apply granular or sprayable FPA-registered insecticides directly into the whorl at whorl stage.
- Spray FPA registered insecticides directly to the ears at the silking stage.



IMPORTANT: Use pesticide judiciously as described in the label.

Reference:
Integrated Pest Management of Insect Pests and Diseases of Corn. Revised Edition. Department of Agriculture Bureau of Plant Industry Crop Pest Management Division 2022.

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