

**Adult** - The moth has a wingspan of about 38.5 mm. The hind wings are white; the front wings are dark gray, mottled with lighter and darker splotches. Each forewing has a noticeable whitish spot near the extreme tip.

**Egg** - Minute, light eggs are laid in clusters of approximately 200 and are covered with grayish, fuzzy scales from the body of the female moth. The eggs become very dark just before hatching.

**Larva** - The fully grown, green, brown, or black larva is 30 to 40 mm long and has a dark brown to black head capsule usually marked with a pale, but distinct, inverted "Y". Along each side of its body is a longitudinal, black stripe, and along the middle of its back is a wider yellowish-gray stripe. [Color plate](#).

**Pupa** - The pupa, approximately 13 mm long, is originally reddish brown and darkens to black as it matures.

## BIOLOGY

**Distribution** - The fall armyworm is a continuous resident of the Gulf states, the tropics of North, Central, and South America, and some of the West Indies. Each year moths may migrate as far northward as Montana, Michigan, and New Hampshire, but usually attain significant populations only in the southeastern states.

**Host Plants** - Corn, sorghum, coastal Bermuda, fescue, and other plants of the grass family are preferred foods. However, the fall armyworm may attack alfalfa, bean, peanut, potato, soybean, sweet potato, turnip, spinach, tomato, cabbage, cucumber, cotton, tobacco, all grain crops, and clover.

**Damage** - Larvae, often migrating in large armies, are potential pasture pests in late summer and fall. Consuming all above ground plant parts, they are capable of killing or severely retarding the growth of pasture crops. In any case, these caterpillars inevitably lower the forage-producing capacity of a pasture. Even though an important pest of pastures, these larvae are more common on late-planted corn or sorghum (see Corn/Sorghum Fall Armyworm Note).

**Life History** - Fall armyworms overwinter in several life stages in the tropics, but usually as pupae in the Gulf Coast region of this country. Moths usually migrate into North Carolina during June and early July. New moths may continue to appear until November. **Each female lays about 1,000 eggs in masses of 50 to several hundred.**

Two to 10 days later, the small larvae emerge, feed in clusters on the remains of the egg mass, and then scatter in search of food. Unlike the nocturnal true armyworms, fall armyworms feed any time of the day or night, but are most active early in the morning or late in the evening. When abundant, these caterpillars eat all the food at hand and then crawl in great armies to adjoining fields. After feeding for 2 or 3 weeks, the larvae dig about 20 mm into the ground to pupate. Within 2 weeks, a new swarm of moths emerges, usually flying several miles before laying eggs. Three to four generations occur each year in North Carolina.

### Fall Armyworms Spotted in Giles County

Fall Armyworms have been reported in Giles County in fescue hay fields and turf grass. They primarily attack pastures, hay fields, home lawns and turfgrass but can cause problems in soybeans and sorghum as well. Newly seeded lawns and pastures are especially susceptible. Soybean producers need to keep an eye on later planted fields for any outbreaks, especially those located near hayfields and other grassy areas.

UT recommends treatment for armyworms in pastures/hay fields when 3-4 larvae are found per square foot. Any hay fields within a week of harvest can be cut rather than treated with insecticide (larvae will not feed on cut hay). There are many good treatment options. Several pyrethroids insecticides including Baythroid XL, Karate or Warrior II, and Mustang Max provide effective control and have short preharvest application restrictions and no grazing restrictions. Other products that have short or no preharvest or grazing restrictions include Intrepid, Tracer, Prevathon and Besiege. A complete list of recommended insecticides and suggested rates can be found in the attached 2014 Pasture Insect Control Recommendations for Tennessee.

Below is a picture of the fall armyworm larvae. Outbreaks are possible throughout the Fall season until frost. Please contact the Extension Office at 363-3523 if you have any questions or need more information.