

Armyworm and Cutworm

Tagalog names: *arabas, harabas, tagustos*

Identifying marks

The adult moth has dark purplish brown forewings with numerous spots and light-colored lines. The hind wings are whitish, narrowly banded along the outer margin. The wingspan is about 30 mm. Larvae are soil-dwelling or hide underground to avoid predation by birds. They become active at night and emerge from the ground. Larvae come in various colors, ranging from creamy white to green or dark purple, with or without stripes.

Where to find

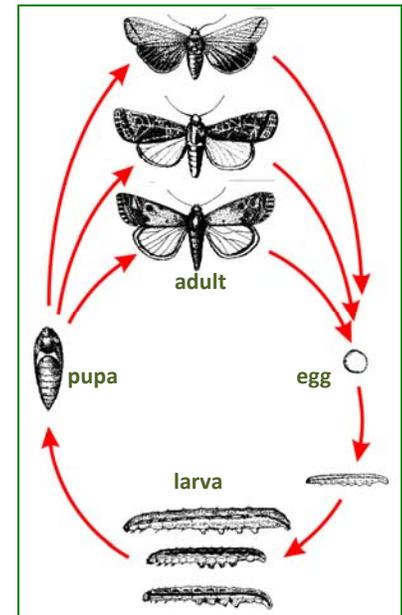
They live in all rice environments, but are serious in upland rice as the pest needs dry soil for pupation. Lowland fields also occasionally suffer damage when the larvae move from one field to another. Armyworms are usually abundant in rice crops grown after a long dry spell.

Damage: Larva is the damaging stage. Young rice plants are often cut at ground level while older plants are only defoliated. Newly hatched larvae usually feed together on the leaf surface. The older larvae are night-feeders and are usually found in the soil around the base of the plants. Susceptible growth stages are from seedling to ripening.

Management options

Cultural

- Plowing of all fallow land exposes dormant pupae to desiccation and beneficial organisms (predators). Bund shaving kills pupae.
- Young seedlings in seedbeds away from large areas of weeds are less prone to larval attack.
- Flooding of nursery beds and stubbles prevents larvae migration and reduces survival.
- Handpicking of egg masses and larvae reduces their population.
- Cutting tops of bundled seedlings prior to transplanting removes egg masses.
- Reducing application of nitrogenous fertilizer lessens their attack.



Life cycle of an armyworm/cutworm

Biological

- Small wasps attack eggs.
- Big wasps and tachinid flies kill larvae. Virus infection by NPV is rampant at the larval stage.
- Ants feed on eggs and larvae.
- Spiders prey on adults, especially the hunting spiders.
- Other predators are ladybird beetles and insectivorous birds (*Drongo- Dicrurus adsimilis*)
- Pheromone trapping--Pheromone traps which are commercially available are very effective in knowing the activity of the adults.

Chemical control

- Sprays are more effective than granules. Spray late in the afternoon. Mix a little brown sugar to increase intake of insecticide by larvae. Mature larvae do not feed voraciously prior to pupation and tend to go inside the soil for pupation.

Source:

PhilRice. 2003 (Rev. ed.). Field guide on harmful organisms in Philippine ricefields. Maligaya, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija.

Reviewed by:
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