

Section III: Field Crop Pests

THE WHEAT HEAD ARMYWORM AND ITS RELATIVE IN EASTERN OREGON

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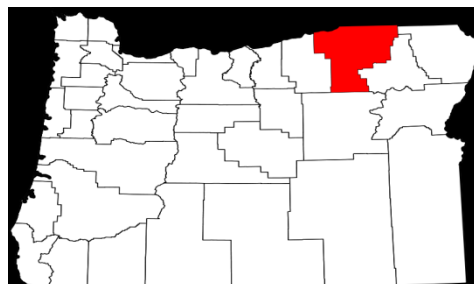
Caterpillars that were thought to be the wheat head armyworm (WHA), *Dargida difussa* Walker, caused localized but severe damage to wheat in Umatilla County of northeastern Oregon and Lincoln County of eastern Washington in 2007 and 2008. About 10,000 acres of winter and spring grains were sprayed with insecticides to control this pest. Concerns over this insect damage prompted investigation into the seasonal abundance of this apparently single month species.

Caterpillars of the genus *Dargida* (Lepidoptera: Noctuidae) can be a troublesome pest of cereal grains in cereal grains throughout the Midwest and Great Plains. Information about this pest in the Pacific Northwest is incomplete at this time. The WHA has the potential to be among the most injurious pests of small grains in the region since it feeds directly on kernels in the wheat head. Growers are often unaware

of the damage until harvest when grain samples reveal damaged kernels. Little is known about the pest or its control. At present, there are no insecticides labeled specifically for WHA.

2010 Research

Surveys were conducted in 2010 in eastern Oregon at 25 locations (Umatilla County). Thirteen locations were surveyed in eastern Washington counties. Each had a pair of traps, one with a sex attractant and one as control. Traps were established in Umatilla County April 7th until September 29th. Figure shows the of Umatilla county.



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Results

Two species of *Dargida* were indentified in the area: *D. terrapictalis* and *D. diffusa*. Of the total number of collected in 2010, 99% corresponded to *D. terrapictalis*. The greatest number of moths per trap captured occurred mid to late May.

moths

Trap monitoring is planned for Umatilla County in the spring of 2011. Further investigation will continue this spring to answer the following questions: regional distribution, season occurrence, and damage relative to larva densities. Growers are concerned about the relationship of this insect damage and production practices.