

FALL ARMYWORMS

(*Spodoptera frugiperda*)

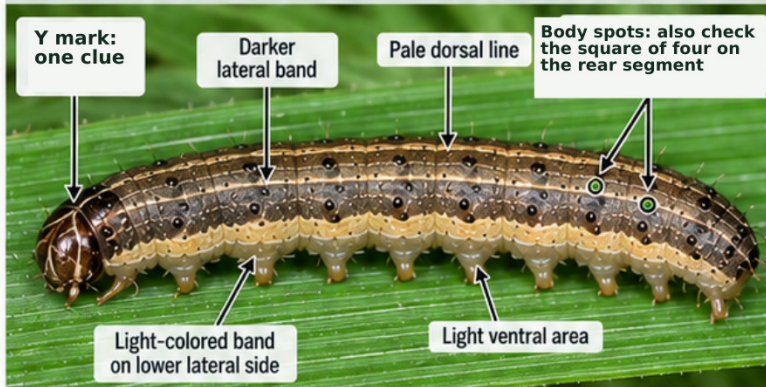
TURFGRASS PEST IDENTIFICATION

SCOUT | IDENTIFY | TAKE ACTION

TurfTechAdvisor

KNOW MORE. GROW FURTHER.

LARVAE (CATERPILLAR) – IDENTIFYING FEATURES



Larvae vary in color (green, brown or gray). Use several identifying features together, not the head marking or turf injury alone.

HEAD CLOSE-UP (Inverted Y)



The inverted Y is one clue. Confirm body stripes, four rear spots, size and live caterpillar features; turf injury alone is not identification.

ADULT (MOTH)



Male (lighter, more contrast)

Female (darker, less contrast)

Moths are night-flying and attracted to lights. Females lay eggs on turf and other plants.

LIFE CYCLE



Eggs
Hatch timing varies

Larvae
Growth varies

Pupa
In soil; timing varies

Adult moth
Later flights and generations vary with region

Development depends on temperature. Southern U.S. outbreaks often occur in summer and fall; arrival and activity vary by region.

FRASS (DROPPINGS)



Frass example
Small pellets of insect frass can help direct scouting. Color and texture vary with diet, moisture, and weather.

Frass example
Appearance does not reliably establish when feeding occurred. Look for caterpillars and confirm their identifying features.

TURF DAMAGE



Irregular brown patches that can expand quickly. Grass may look ragged or chewed, especially in high-traffic or sunny areas.



Leaves may be clipped or skeletonized. Damage can progress quickly, especially during late summer and fall.

WHERE TO LOOK

- Sunny, open areas
- Thin or stressed turf
- Along turf edges, field borders, and near weedy areas
- Check at night or early morning when larvae are active
- Look for feeding damage and frass in the thatch and at the base of plants

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Irregular brown patches
- Ragged or chewed blades
- Injury may spread rapidly
- Frass can direct scouting, but cannot confirm species
- Find live caterpillars and inspect multiple ID features
- Seasonal risk varies by region

SCOUTING TIPS

- Part turf at several sites
- Look for live larvae at the base of grass plants
- Record size, numbers and the area sampled
- For a flush test, use a local extension protocol; do not improvise a soap recipe
- Recheck as activity warrants

MANAGEMENT NOTES

- Treat when larvae are present and causing damage
- Best control is on small larvae (early instars)
- Maintain healthy, properly irrigated turf
- Insecticides may be needed for severe infestations
- Multiple generations can occur – continue to scout
- Follow label instructions for recommended products



PRO TIP:

Frass is a scouting clue, not a clock. Confirm live caterpillars using multiple features before recommending treatment.

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CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

Treatment results depend on correct identification, pest life stage, product, timing, and application conditions. Later hatch or reinfestation may require further monitoring. Base any additional treatment on scouting, site history, local guidance, and the product label—not an automatic repeat schedule.

[1] Oklahoma State University Extension — Pest identification and biology

<https://extension.okstate.edu/programs/turfgrass-science/educational-materials/fall-armyworms>