

BERTHA ARMYWORM Lepidoptera: Noctuidae *Mamestra configurata*

DESCRIPTION

The **adult** is a greenish-gray or gray moth with two spots on the front wings, a small round spot with a large "kidney-shaped" white or gray spot on the middle of the wing, and a whitish band near the fringe of the wing. **Larvae** are about 40 mm long when mature. The head is pale brown with or without dark arcs and reticulations, and without an inverted white "Y". The color of the larva varies from green to gray, brown, or black. The mid-dorsal and top-lateral lines are white, broken and inconspicuous. The area above the spiracles is marked with brownish or orange at the dorsal margin and usually with small black spots around the spiracles. Spiracles are white with black rims. The stripe below the spiracles is yellow or orange, and the bottom area is mottled gray or greenish.

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

Larval damage is most evident in summer and fall, especially on fruit trees, sugarbeets, hops, mint, and potatoes. On seed alfalfa, larvae are most serious in mid-summer. Larvae feed on the foliage and fruit or host plants causing stunting and reducing quality and yield. Average defoliation of potato in British Columbia has been over 10%, and larval damage to tree fruit has reached 10% in some areas of the northwest.

DISTRIBUTION AND LIFE HISTORY

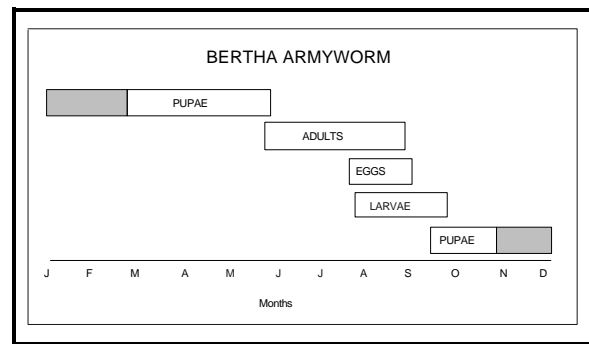
This pest is distributed throughout the northwest, southern British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Bertha armyworm overwinters as a pupa in the soil. Adults emerge in April, and the females deposit eggs in masses on the underside of leaves of crop plants and weeds (particularly lambsquarters) in May. Eggs hatch in four to eight days. Larvae dangle from the plant by threads of silk until they reach other leaves or are blown by the wind to other plants, where they begin feeding. Thus infestations of bertha armyworm tend to occur in patches fairly close to where the eggs were deposited. Larvae feed for five or six weeks in June and July before pupating in the soil. Some adults emerge from the soil during mid- to late July and begin a second generation in August. Damage caused by these larvae is noticeable in mid-August and September. There are two overlapping generations each year.



Bertha armyworm larva



Bertha armyworm adult



MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL

Natural parasites and virus diseases are important factors that regulate the population of this armyworm in British Columbia. Little is known about the influence of these natural enemies on the population in the northwest, although they could be contributing to the sporadic occurrence of this pest. Insecticides are registered to control larvae of this pest, but should be used carefully to protect natural enemies. See the Pacific Northwest Insect Control Handbook for a list of registered insecticides and recommendations on particular crops.

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