



# Black cutworm

## Overview

Damage from black cutworm (BCW) can range from very little to almost 100 percent stand loss. A high rate of BCW moth catches, green fields and late planting dates are the perfect recipe for significant damage from BCW. To give late-planted corn the best yield potential, make controlling this pest a high priority.

## What you should know

- Although small, black cutworm can cause big losses, with the potential to wipe out a stand of corn.
- BCW adults do not overwinter in northern states, but rather migrate from the South in April and May. Female moths lay eggs in fencerows, pastures, plant debris and fields with weedy vegetation—especially those with winter annuals.
- Larvae go through seven stages of development and are most damaging during the third and fourth stages, when they are  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch long. Mature larvae can be up to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches long.
- Total feeding time for the larvae ranges from 20 to 30 days.
- Once fields are infested, rescue treatment may be needed. To prevent BCW damage, consider planting hybrids with in-plant insect protection.

## Action steps

1. **Scout:** Inspect plants at least weekly, from first emergence to V6. Look for wilted or cut plants. Note: plants may be cut off below the soil surface.
2. **Recognize the pest:** BCW larvae vary in color from light gray to black. They have four dark tubercles on top of each abdominal segment.
3. **Know when treatment is necessary:** Select a rescue treatment if three percent or more of the plants have been damaged, corn plants are in the V2 to V6 stage of development and larvae are still 1 inch or less in length.



*Black cutworm larvae cause the most damage in their third and fourth stages of growth, when they are about  $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ " long.*



## 30-Second Summary

- Black cutworm (BCW) can devastate stands of corn and are most damaging when they are still small ( $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ " long).
- Scout weekly for BCW from first emergence to V6.
- Consider hybrids with in-plant insect protection to prevent BCW damage.
- Once an infestation occurs, rescue treatment may be necessary.

## NOTES:

For more information, contact:



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1-888-647-3478