

Slugs

Overview

Slugs can be difficult to manage in no-till systems, but planning ahead and using a coordinated integrated pest management approach can prevent damaging yield loss. Young plants can tolerate some defoliation without a yield penalty, but it's important to manage slug pressure early in the growing season because rescue treatment options are limited.

What you should know

- Slug damage in corn and soybeans has increased with the adoption of no-till and minimum-till practices.
- Slugs favor cool, moist conditions and available plant residue.
- Row cleaners and strip tillage can warm the soil, creating an unfavorable environment for slugs while young plants have a favorable growing condition.
- Damage in corn and small grains is caused by slugs scraping along leaves.
- In soybeans, slug damage can result in stand loss.
- Outpacing slug pressure with plant growth is your best defense, so look for corn hybrids and soybean varieties with good emergence and vigor. Manage weed pressure and fertility to promote early growth.

Action steps

1. **Observe slug activity:** Look for the characteristic trail of slime. In corn, damage appears as window panes, then tattered leaves. Damage in soybeans starts with deep feeding scars in the cotyledons, then irregular holes in leaves.
2. **Promote early-season vigor:** Ensure crops can outgrow feeding pressure early in the growing season.
3. **Choose an optimum planting date:** If soils are so wet that the seed trench does not close behind the planter, slugs will have protected access to growing seedlings night and day.
4. **Consider chemical control:** Metaldehyde-based chemicals provide effective control, but are expensive. Foliar application of a 30% urea-based nitrogen solution can be effective. It works as a direct contact irritant, so slugs must be active on leaf surfaces to be effective. Apply at night for best results.

For more information, contact:

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Manage slug pressure by ensuring crops can outgrow feeding pressure early in the season.



30-Second Summary

- Slugs can cause yield and stand loss.
- Giving plants a good head start against slugs is your best defense.
- Choosing hybrids and varieties with good early-season emergence and vigor, and controlling weed pressure to get plants off to a good start, can help plant growth outpace slug feeding pressures.

NOTES:
