

Pest Profile



Photo credit: (Left) John Capinera, University of Florida, Bugwood.org; (Right) Frank Peairs, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org

Common Name: Alfalfa Webworm

Scientific Name: *Loxostege cereralis*

Order and Family: Lepidoptera, Crambidae

Size and Appearance:

	Length (mm)	Appearance
Egg		The eggs are oval-shaped and somewhat flattened on the bottom; the eggs are strongly convex on the upper surface. When they are first laid, the eggs are pearly white in color and turn yellow as the larvae develop within. A day or two before hatching, a black spot appears.
Larva	25.4-38.1 mm	The larvae are greenish-yellow in color and have three elongate, black spots that are arranged in a triangle on the upper portion on the side of each segment except for the front three segments. Bristly hairs project from each spot. The head is light in color. The caterpillar has five pairs of prolegs on the abdomen, with the hooks on each proleg forming an almost complete circle. The larvae usually spin webs over the leaves that they feed upon.
Adult	Wingspan: 30-34 mm	The forewings of the adult moths are a whitish or pale gray with several longitudinal black and brown streaks; a whitish or pale-yellow patch is positioned in the middle area near the anterior margin of the wing. The subterminal areas of the forewings are yellow. The hindwings are gray with darker shading along the veins. The fringe of the hindwings are pale gray.
Pupa (if applicable)		The larvae construct an earthen cell that is lined with silk. The pupa itself is light yellow to dark brown which is dependent on their age. The anterior end of the pupa is rounded with the posterior end coming to a point and bearing eight spoon-shaped appendages.

Type of feeder (Chewing, sucking, etc.): Larvae have chewing mouthparts.

Host/s: The larvae feed on a variety of field and vegetable crops along with several weed species. Although it does feed on a variety of weed species, shepherd purse, lambsquarter and redroot pigweed are highly preferred. For field crops, alfalfa and sugar beets are highly preferred; however, it will prefer the weed species mentioned above over these crops. They also have been found feeding on cabbage, cherry, carrot, parsnip, beans, corn, sunflower, spinach, potato, garden beets, cherry trees, peas, strawberries, raspberries, and honey dew melons. Weed species includes ragweed, wild cucumber, wild parsnip, Lady's thumb, witch grass, sweet clover, wild carrot, thistles, and Russian Thistle.

Description of Damage (larvae and adults): The larvae damage alfalfa and sugar beets, skeletonizing leaves and webbing leaves together as they feed. The caterpillar feeds on the upper leaf surface and can be most damaging to seedling alfalfa. Defoliation in crop fields is usually worse in weedy fields.

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