

Pest Profile



Photo credit: (Left) Frank Peairs, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org; (Right) Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org

Common Name: Beet Armyworm

Scientific Name: *Spodoptera exigua*

Order and Family: Lepidoptera, Noctuidae

Size and Appearance:

	Length (mm)	Appearance
Egg		The individual eggs of beet armyworm are circular when viewed from above; when examined from the side, the egg is slightly peaked and tapering to a point.
Larva/Nymph	Mature 31.8 mm	The larvae can be variable in color but are usually a light-dark green, smooth in appearance, and have a dark stripe down the back. They have a distinct spot on the side of the middle of the thorax and a brown head. The abdomen has five pairs of prolegs with the hooks (crochets) on the prolegs in a half circle or curved band. Dark or black color variations of this caterpillar can occur along with green variations, especially in the fall or spring.
Adult	Wingspan: 25-30 mm	The adult is moderately sized, and the forewings are mottled gray and brown. The forewings normally contain an irregular banding pattern with a light-colored, bean-shaped spot. The hindwings are more uniform in a gray or white color and trimmed with a dark line at the margin.
Pupa (if applicable)	15-20 mm	Pupation of beet armyworm occurs in the soil. A chamber is constructed from sand and soil particles that are held together with oral secretion that hardens when it dries. The pupa itself is brown in color.

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

Host/s: Beet armyworm feeds on a variety of vegetable, field, and flower crops. Amongst the vegetable crops that are considered host to *S. exigua* are asparagus, bean, beet, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, chickpea, cowpea, eggplant, lettuce, onion, pea, pepper, potato, radish, spinach, sweet potato, tomato, and turnip. Field crops that are host to this species include alfalfa, corn, cotton, peanut, safflower, sorghum, soybean, sugarbeet, and tobacco. Weed species include lambsquarters, pigweed, purslane, Russian thistle, *Parthenium sp.*, and *Tidestromia sp.*

Description of Damage (larvae and adults): The larvae of beet armyworm feed on both foliage and fruit. The younger caterpillars feed gregariously and skeletonize the foliage. As the larvae mature, they eat irregular holes in leaves. In the head of cabbage, they can burrow into the crown or center and feed on the buds of cole crops. The fruit of tomatoes are susceptible to injury, especially earlier during the growing period.

References:

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