

## BATTLE RIVER AGRONOMY UPDATE

DECEMBER, 2014

As has become an annual December theme, I would like to review insect issues encountered in my travels in 2014 and relay some of the information on these pests that is available through the excellent work being done by Scott Meers of Alberta Agriculture. The Alberta Insect Pest Monitoring Network should be a bookmarked page on every producer's internet browser. Scott and the rest of the staff do amazing work in keeping track of what is happening in the world of insect pests in our province.

This month, I would like to concentrate on insects that may affect our canola crops. While I did find instances of bertha army worm feeding in most crops, there were no cases even close to approaching economic thresholds. Provincially only 25 out of 315 pheromone traps showed elevated levels of risk. In east central Alberta, the only trap showing elevated moth levels was one south of Camrose. All other traps showed low levels, but the populations tended to be higher than they were in 2013. Whether this is a trend indicating increasing problems for next year, or just a one year blip has yet to be determined. So we need to pay close attention to levels going into 2015. The monitoring network has now grown to the extent that it is getting very reliable at picking up even small localized outbreaks, so check in often on their website next summer to see what is happening in your area.

Diamondback Moth activity was very sporadic in east central Alberta in 2014. They were present in most fields that I scouted, but levels were low and feeding damage hard to find. The monitoring network for this pest has only about 10% of the traps that are put out for Bertha Army Worms, so you need to be aware of what is going on in your fields. This pest does not overwinter in our area, so past activity is NOT an indicator of what the future may hold. Look for strong prevailing winds from the south east during seeding. These winds often blow adult moths up from the south. Once here, they will lay their eggs and produce offspring. Once established there may be as many as 4 generations in a growing season. The generations all overlap, so it is not uncommon to find larvae of all sizes in the same field.

Remember two years ago when all the talk was about Asters Yellow, and the effect it was having on canola yields? While some called for the development of control programs for the leaf hoppers that carry the disease, those doing research in the field said we were looking at the peak of the outbreak; that only a small percentage of the leaf hopper population was infected and that incidence levels would quickly return to normal. Well, the experts were right! While I could find individual plants that were infected in many canola fields, the levels were extremely low. No doubt we will see this disease again over the next several years, but at this point it would seem that any methods we employ to control the leaf hoppers is doing more damage to beneficial insects than any good we may derive.

Finally I would like to mention a new pest that may be working its way into the province from Saskatchewan. Swede Midge (picture of damage seen below),



(picture courtesy of fieldcropnews.com)

Is being in Saskatchewan right now and is anticipated to be found in Alberta in the near future. Traps were set up last year for the first time, with a few around Edmonton and the rest along the Saskatchewan border. None were found in 2014, but this pest has the potential to be very serious. They do their damage from within the canola plant and are therefore impervious to in crop insecticides. At this time there is no control method for Swede Midge, although research is ongoing.

Finally, on behalf of Battle River Implements, I want to wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year!