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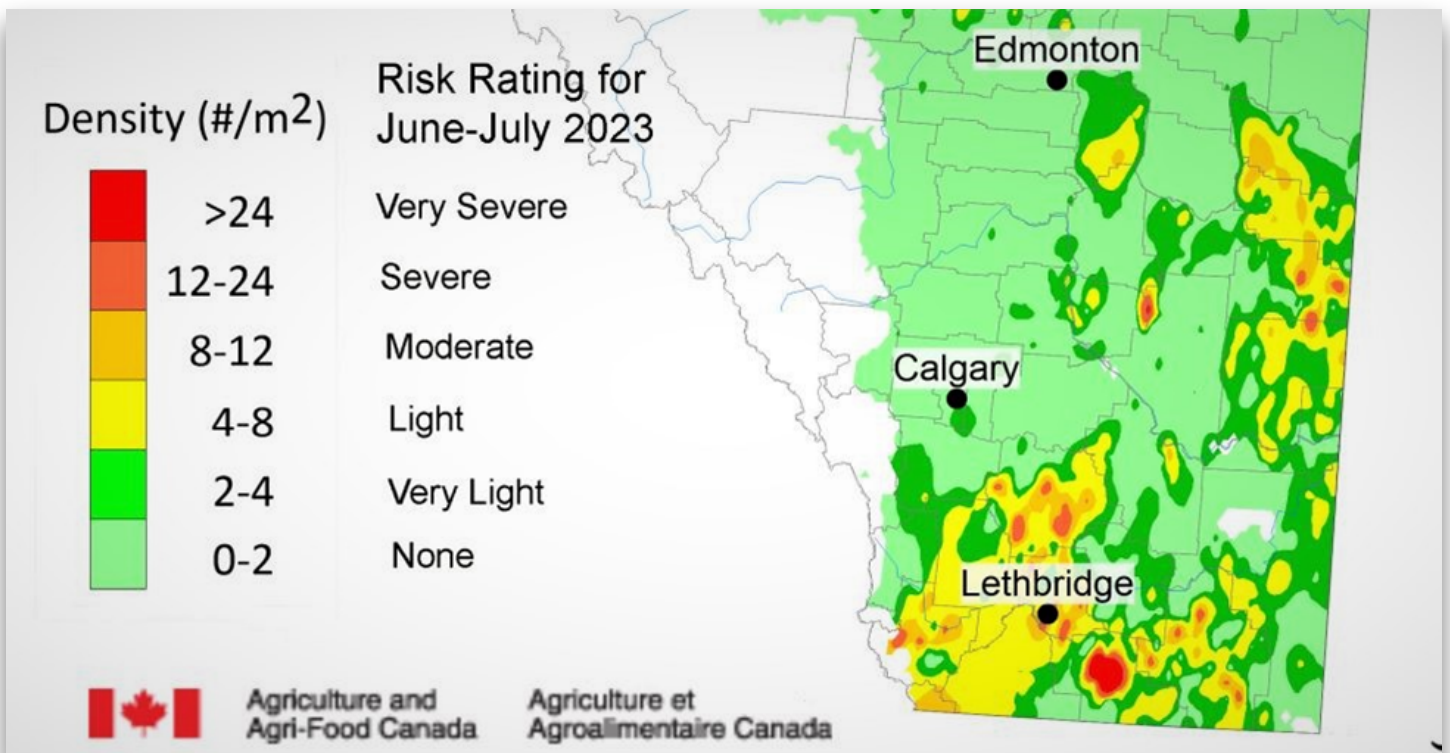
# June Agronomy Update

## *Insect Scouting*

Unfortunately, 2023 has been a dry year so far. In most cases, crops are up and getting established, but in some cases they are already showing signs of stress. These conditions make it especially important to be on the lookout for insect issues that can quickly become a real threat to a young struggling crop. Dry conditions are particularly favourable for species such as grasshoppers, flea beetles, and some species of cut worms. Other insects, such as wheat midge, often show reduced populations in dry years as the topsoil dries out to the point that it impacts their hatch. So what are the anticipated risks for central Alberta this growing season?

### GRASSHOPPERS

Grasshoppers are generally at the top of every one's list in a dry year, and this year is no exception. Although the 2022 Grasshopper survey put Camrose, Provost and Wainwright mostly as a "light" risk, with some areas "moderate" this can change in a hurry, so despite what the map may say, I'd suggest getting out there and checking your fields, as the problem is easier to deal with when the grasshoppers are small.



Scout the ditches adjacent to the field edge as well as the headlands to get a rough idea of the population. A fast and dirty method is to simply count how many you see as you walk. Walk for about 50 meters, pick 5 random 1 m samples and count the number you see hop in that 1 m. Average the 5 samples to get a rough estimate of grasshoppers/m<sup>2</sup>. Remember that even grasshoppers have limits to how hot they like it, so don't scout when temperatures above are 30 C. The grasshoppers will be looking for shade by then and so should you! The economic threshold is going to change with the crop type and prices, but according to Alberta Ag, a good rule of thumb is;

**Table 1.** Economic thresholds for grasshoppers

	Number of grasshoppers/m <sup>2</sup>	
	Field	Roadside
Control not usually required	0 - 6	0 - 12
Control may be required	7 - 12	13 - 24
Control required	13+	25+

## FLEA BEETLES

Flea beetles are something we need to be on the lookout for every year. Despite hearing reports of flea beetle activity from other parts of the province, I have been pleasantly surprised by the lack of activity I am seeing so far, but they will show up. The highest risk is almost always where you have emerging canola adjacent to canola stubble from last year, but try to check the entire perimeter of your field, as they like to overwinter in the headlands. Crops with uneven or poor emergence are most vulnerable. A heavier plant count spreads the damage across a larger number of plants, allowing them to tolerate the feeding better. The action threshold for spraying is when the crop averages 25% leaf loss. You should continue to scout until the canola is past the 4 leaf stage; by then it will be too large for the feeding to seriously impact it. For more details on flea beetle scouting, check out the Canola council website at <https://www.canolacouncil.org/canola-encyclopedia/insects/flea-beetles/>

## CUTWORMS

There are scattered reports of cutworm activity out there, so keep a lookout for bare patches in the crop that seem to be getting larger, especially on south facing slopes. Cutworm infestations have been described as a totally random event because there is no predicting where the adults are going to lay their eggs every fall. Having cutworms in 2022 does not mean you will have cutworms in that same field in 2023; conversely having no cutworms in 2022 does not mean you don't need to look for them this year! There are several species of cutworms in Alberta, and they each have their own feeding pattern and host species preference, so it's important to understand what species you are dealing with in order to have an effective control plan. Details on species identification and monitoring can be found at <https://www.alberta.ca/cutworm.aspx>. And if you are dealing with cutworms, please take the time to fill out the Cutworm web submission form. This helps everybody identify areas and species of concern. It can be found at [https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/pestmon.nsf/CutwormWebSubmission](https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/pestmon.nsf/CutwormWebSubmission).

And finally, for weekly updates on insect issues throughout Western Canada, there is no better source of information than the Prairie Pest Monitoring Network. If you don't already subscribe, you should! It delivers weekly updates to your inbox on what is happening with all the major crop pests we deal with. Subscribe at <https://prairiepest.ca/>.