

FALL ARMYWORM

Hi all,

As you would be aware, there has been significant media attention on the discovery of the invasive pest Fall armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) on Erub and Saibai islands in the Torres Strait.

This is an invasive moth pest that has been recorded on more than 350 plant species (including 80 crops), causing damage to crops such as maize, rice, sorghum, sugarcane and wheat, plus other horticultural crops and cotton.

Work is underway to determine the likely distribution of the pest and a response strategy. Its impacts will depend on which strain or strains of moth are present and further work to determine the extent of the pest on these islands.

Based on the insect's recent history, eradication is unlikely unless the initial incursion is small in both size and distribution.

The Australian sugarcane industry, through CANEGROWERS and SRA, is working with governments and industry groups to manage the threat posed by fall armyworm and respond appropriately, but the community, industry and agronomists are encouraged to report any unexpected symptoms in the field by phoning the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.

CANEGROWERS (Mick Quirk) is the industry representative organisation for the response, and SRA has assisted with specialist knowledge via Dr Kevin Powell, KFA3 Leader – Pests, Diseases and Weeds and Principal Researcher, Disease Management, Dr Nicole Thompson.

Growers should have on-farm biosecurity measures in place to protect their crops from pests and diseases.

Fall armyworm larvae are light coloured with a larger, darker head. As they develop, they become browner with white lengthwise stripes and develop dark spots with spines. Adult moths are 32mm to 40mm in length (wing tip to wing tip) with a brown or grey forewing and a white hind wing.

Native to tropical and subtropical regions of the Americas, it was first detected outside its native range in early 2016, spreading to Africa, the Indian subcontinent, China and Southeast Asia. A strong flier, fall armyworm is believed to have covered most of its geographical range through natural dispersal, but can also spread through the movement of infested plant material.

If growers have specific questions about this pest, you can refer them to myself or the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline.

Cheers,
Anthony



Anthony Curro | Regional Co-ordinator
(Burdekin)

T 07 47 838 602 M 0484 349
868 sugarresearch.com.au
Burdekin Office 30962 Bruce Highway Brandon
QLD 4808 Australia
Postal Address PO Box 387 Brandon QLD 4808
Australia
ABN 16 163 670 068

