

News Column for Use Week of 4/5/2021
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River Valley District
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Alfalfa Weevils in Early Spring

Alfalfa weevil larvae have been hatching throughout North Central Kansas for the last couple of weeks. First larvae/feeding reported on March 21st with leaves and brooming feeding damage on the tips of the new terminals. Larval hatching and feeding will only increase as temperature increases. A good place to check and see what growth stage could be out in your field is by going to mesonet.k-state.edu. There you can select which station and see how many growing degrees there have been. It takes temperatures in the mid to low 20's for a couple of hours to adversely affect the young larvae.

What to look for in the field. The adult weevil will be 3/16 inch long and light brown with a dark brown strip down its back. The adults also have a distinctive long snout. The larvae will be small, light green, black-headed, and legless with a white strip down the center of their body. The larvae feed on the terminal and the upper leaves causing defoliation. When they reach the adult stage, they will start “debarking” the stem.

Deciding when and if treatment is needed. The stem-count method is the recommended way. This is where you carefully break off 30 to 50 stems and shake them individually in a clean, deep bucket. Once you count the weevils in the bucket, the treatment is based on the stage of alfalfa and how many per stem were found. If you find 33-50% infestation or 1-2 per stem, action should be taken. If the alfalfa field is close enough to harvest, swathing is recommended. After that first cutting, the alfalfa weevils will move on. If the field is not close to harvest, then an insecticide might be an option. For insecticide options check out Alfalfa Insect Management MF809 by KSU. In addition, it is important to spray with an adequate amount of carrier i.e., water to achieve good coverage. After application and the reentry interval continue to monitor the eggs as they may continue to hatch or until swathing. Always check the preharvest interval for your product choice.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out. Contact Rebecca Zach at 785-527-5084 or by email at zrebecca@ksu.edu.