

## Fall armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*)

Fall armyworm is an exotic pest that has been detected in Queensland. It can cause sudden crop damage.

Based on overseas experience, fall armyworm larvae can cause significant and sudden crop damage to preferred hosts if left unchecked.

Adults have been known to fly long distances and migrate quickly, particularly with strong wind. Check crops regularly to detect the early stages of infestation.

### Pest risk

Fall armyworm caterpillars are reported to feed on more than 350 different species of plants. The larval stage of this pest can damage and destroy a wide variety of crops with a preference for corn, sugarcane, sorghum, rice and grass crops. Fall armyworm may also damage cotton, vegetable and other non-grass crops.

### Appearance

#### Eggs



Eggs are pale yellow in colour and 0.4 mm in diameter and 0.3 mm in height. They are laid in fuzzy 'egg masses', which stick to foliage. There are 100–200 eggs in a 'mass'.

*Image 1 – Egg mass*

#### Larvae



*Image 2 – Larvae emerging from egg mass*



*Image 3 – Older larvae with 'Y' shape on head*

The larvae are light green to brown in colour with a larger darker head. As they develop, they become darker with white lengthwise stripes and dark spots with spines. Older larvae (30–36 mm long) have a distinctive pattern of four spots on the second to last body segment and an inverted 'Y' shape pattern on their heads.

## Pupa

The pupa is red-brown in colour, 14–18 mm in length and approximately 4.5 mm wide. Pupation mostly occurs in soil under the host plant, and occasionally in host vegetation on the ground. Fall armyworm do not hibernate during winter and cannot survive temperatures below 10°C.

## Adult



**Image 4 – Female moth**



**Image 5 – Male moth**

The adult moths have a brown or grey forewing and a white hindwing, and a wingspan of 32–40 mm. Male fall armyworms have more patterns and a distinct white spot on each forewing. Cotton Info's [Insect ID Guide](#) provides a detailed guide to identifying fall armyworm.

## Symptoms and damage



**Image 6 – Larval damage in whorl of maize**



**Image 7 – Corn leaf damage**

Symptoms include leaf damage such as pinholes, windowing, tattered leaf margins, skeletisation and defoliation of plants, and chewing damage to fruits and vegetables.

## What should I do?

Be on the lookout and if you suspect fall armyworm, report immediately to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries on **13 25 23**.

## More information

For more information, including management information for key crops, contact us on **13 25 23** or visit [daf.qld.gov.au](http://daf.qld.gov.au).

*Images 1–2, 4–5 by James Castner, University of Florida*

*Image 3 by D. Balaraju*

*Image 6 by University of Georgia, bugwood.org*

*Image 7 by Paul Choate, University of Florida*