

FOCUS on South Plains Agriculture

A newsletter from the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center at Lubbock

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Uncommon Bugs Damaging Peas, Cotton and Mesquite

Potential Threat to Peas (and Other Legumes?), Related Pest on Mesquite

Blayne Reed and Patrick Porter

Last week's FOCUS showed *Mozena obtusa*, a pest of mesquite which we have also found feeding on, and laying eggs in, corn. As of today, Blayne Reed has documented *M. obtusa* feeding in the terminals of cotton. The majority of the bugs were feeding in nearby corn and pigweed, but lesser numbers were damaging cotton. Weed control might shift a greater number of insects to cotton.



Mozena obtusa, the species found damaging cotton.

To date we have documented large numbers of these insects on area mesquite and this insect has been proposed as a biological control agent for mesquite in Australia. We are also finding it on mimosa trees.



Mozena obtusa on mesquite, Swisher County, 6/26/14. Photo credit Blayne Reed.

Unfortunately, this week we found a very similar looking insect decimating field peas at the Lubbock Center. This bug is about $\frac{3}{4}$ " long and looks a lot like *M. obtusa* but we don't think it is; it is slightly smaller and has a grey body color. *Mozena obtusa* is not known to feed on legume crops, however other species in the genus *Mozena* can feed on peas and other legumes. So at this point we are thinking this is another species in the *Mozena* genus in the family of leaf-footed bugs (Coreidae). We have scouted alfalfa and have not found this insect present.

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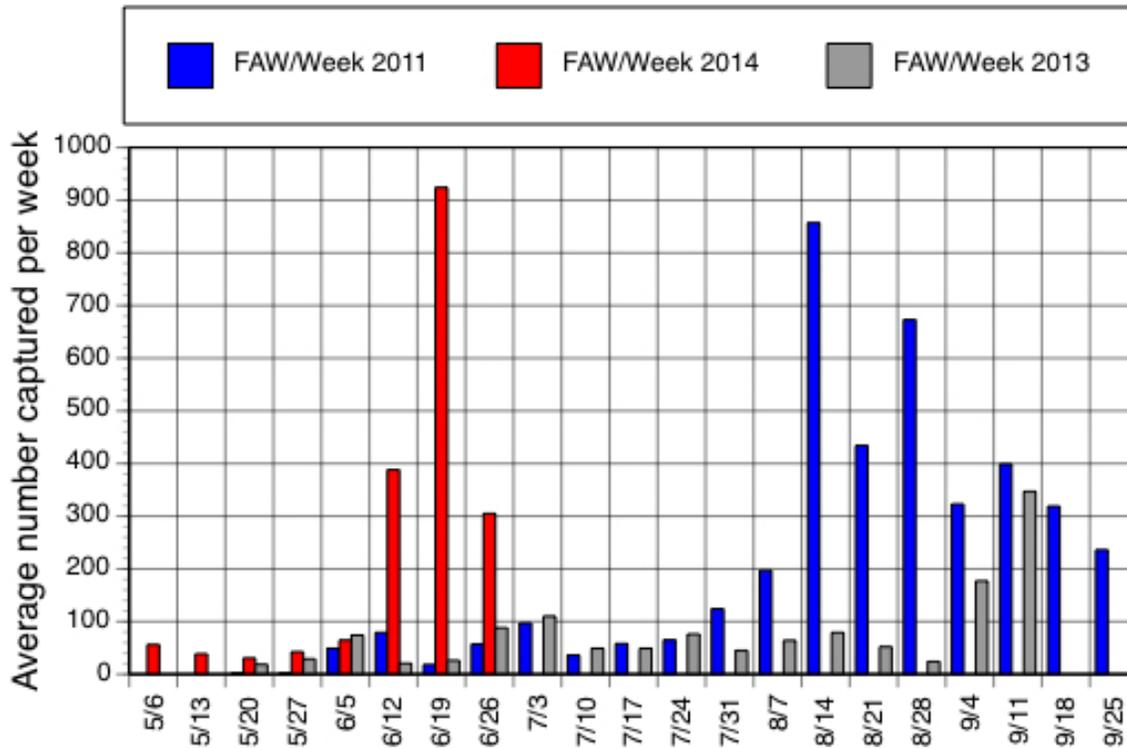
Unidentified leaf-footed bug feeding on peas and perhaps other legumes.

The damage to peas at Lubbock is impressive. Monti Vandiver, our former IPM Agent in Bailey and Parmer counties, was at the Lubbock Center this week and drove by the pea field and then said he thought he was looking at a herbicide damage trial. The insects feed on the youngest tissue and this causes young leaves to pucker and growing points to wilt and perhaps die. I describe the leaf damage in terms of “like thrips damage to cotton, only on steroids”. Our field at Lubbock is severely yellowed as a result of the damage and the plants are beginning to recover after treatment four days ago.

We don't have any treatment thresholds for this insect, but there was approximately one bug per seven plants in our Lubbock field and every plant in the field had significant damage. We treated with bifenthrin (Brigade at 4.0 oz.) but are not sure we got a good kill; there were very few bugs left in the field but we found almost no dead insects. They might have left the field due to the repellent properties of pyrethroid insecticides. We simply don't know which insecticides will be effective. That being said, we wanted to get the word out about a potential threat to peas and other legumes, and we wanted to explain what is going on with our mesquite. RPP and BR.

Fall Armyworm Trap Counts Still High

2014 fall armyworm pheromone trap captures (moths per week) at Lubbock. 2011 was a high fall armyworm year.



Fall armyworm pheromone trap captures at the Lubbock Center have declined this week but are still well above normal levels. Hayden Hadley in Muleshoe is reporting very high numbers in his traps; on the order of 800 moths per week. Gary Cross, Extension Agent AG in Hale County, reported 275 moths captured this week. Rick Minzenmayer, Extension IPM Agent in Runnels County, is reporting 4-5 fall armyworm larvae per plant in forage sorghum and relatively fewer in grain sorghum. It seems the fall armyworm outbreak is widespread.

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