

COMMONLY OCCURRING INSECT PROBLEMS IN SORGHUM PRODUCTION

Time of year/ Crop Growth Stage	Description	Distribution	Probable Insect
1. Planting time seed attacking insects	Poor emergence of plants or seeds fail to germinate. Seeds mechanically injured or destroyed.	Statewide	False wireworms, Seed corn beetles, Kafirants, wireworms
2. Early season	Plants stunted or lodging early in the season. Occasionally, plants die. Underground portion of stem show signs of tunneling and feeding. Hard shelled yellowish larvae may be present.	Statewide	Wireworms
3. Early season	Plants stunted or lodged. Roots destroyed or severely pruned. C-shaped whitish grubs present.	Statewide	White grubs
4. Early season	Plants lodged. Brace roots absent or appear to have dried up. This is common during some years. Soil dry in the area where brace roots should be developing. Often mistaken for insect injury.	Statewide	Usually physiological
5. Seedling to 6 in. plants	Upper epidermis of leaf tissue chewed away. Pattern shows as a series of streaks or whitish stripes. Definite mechanical destruction of tissue can be observed. Tiny, hard-shelled, shiny, beetles present about 1/16 of an inch length. Jump rapidly when disturbed.	Statewide	Flea beetles
6. Seedling to 6 in. plants	Similar to flea beetle injury. Small, fine white streaks present on surface of leaf tissue. Small splinter-like insects present on the plants, usually in the whorls. Less than 1/16 inch long, color varies from transparent to darkish, some winged, some not.	Statewide	Thrips
7. Seedling to 6 in. plants	Plants partially or totally cut off just above or below the soil surface. Brownish to blackish worms may be present. Generally under the soil surface in the vicinity of injured plants.	Statewide, Although more common in the eastern areas	Cutworms
8. May to June on seedling plants	Plants showing signs of seedling reddening, sometimes plants dying. Insects present on above ground portions of the plant. Tiny, light green, soft-bodied insects. Or, sometimes, if insects have disappeared, numerous whitish cast skins present on the foliage and the soil around affected plants.	Statewide, But more common in central and eastern areas	Greenbugs
9. May to June on seedling plants	Injury similar to #8, except affected leaves develop distinctive purplish color, older leaves may fire and turn yellow. Insects similar to greenbugs, but somewhat smaller, lemon-yellow colored.	More common in eastern areas	Yellow sugarcane aphids

Time of year/ Crop Growth Stage	Description	Distribution	Probable Insect
10. May to June on seedling 6 in. plants	Medium to dark green sucking insects present, especially in whorls of plants. Prominent cornicles or tail-pipes present on the upper side near the rear end of the body. Tail-pipes are darkish in color. The area around the base of the tail-pipes at the insect is also darkish in color. Generally no visible injury associated with these insects, even though they may be quite numerous. Also see #13.	Statewide	Corn leaf aphids
11. May to June seedling plants to 6 in. high	Damage generally appearing at the margin of the field progressing inward. Small plants showing signs of stunting or dying. Occasionally much reddish discoloration in the lower portions of the plants. Either partially grown or full grown bugs feeding either above or below ground on plants. Immature bugs, reddish to blackish with a white stripe across the middle of the back. Adults black except for whitish wings. Adults insect about $\frac{1}{8}$ in. long or less.	Generally in the eastern half of the state, usually in sorghum fields adjacent to wheat	Chinch bugs
12. May to June seedling plants to 6 in high	Small plants dying, larger plants with the central leaves in the whorl dying. Signs of tunneling present on the underground portion of the stem. Frequently, destroys the growing point. Silken tunnels may be attached to the underground portion of the plant. Slender worms up to about $\frac{3}{4}$ in. in length may be present. Generally greenish to bluish-green. Very agile, and moves rapidly when disturbed.	Are likely to be present in Southcentral areas of Kansas	Lesser corn stalk borer
13. June. July. and August. Whorl stage	Leaves shiny and syrupy excessive honeydew present, aphids present in upper portions of the plant. Whitish cast skins also frequently present. Some leaves yellow with reddish blotches.	Statewide	Corn leaf aphids
14. June, July. and August. Whorl stage or heading stage	Lower leaves shiny and sticky excessive honeydew deposit. Light green soft bodied insects present on underside of leaves. Reddish areas develop on leaves where colonies are present. Leaves die where heavy infestation develops and is allowed to persist.	Statewide	Greenbugs
15. June. July. and August. Whorl stage	Holes in leaves. Occasionally, plants very ragged. Damage often more severe on late planted fields.	Statewide	Fall army worms
16. August, September. During bloom stage	Small, light brown, fuzzy striped worms present in heads of sorghum, about $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch in length when full grown.	Limited to extreme southeast Kansas	Sorghum webworm
17. August, September. During bloom stage	Seeds fail to develop on part or most of the head. Heads appear to be "blasted." Tiny orange to reddish maggot occasionally present, but generally not visible except under the microscope.	Limited to extreme southeast Kansas	Sorghum midge

Time of year/ Crop Growth Stage	Description	Distribution	Probable Insect
18. August, September	Destroys grain in the developing head. Infestation usually begins during or shortly after bloom. Worms range in size from ¼ up to 1½ inches in length. Larvae possess a series of stripes on the body. Predominant color may be greenish, pinkish, to almost blackish. Head capsule uniform light brown color.	More common in the southern half of the state	Corn ear worm
19. July, August	Visible feeding on leaves particularly around field margins. Occasional signs of feeding on developing seeds in the head may also be present.	Statewide	Grasshoppers
20. July, August	Discoloration, browning and yellowing of lower leaves; signs of light webbing on underside of affected leaves. Tiny crawling “specks” may be present. Greenbugs sometimes also present.	More common in the western portions of Kansas	Spider mites
21. July, August September	Plant showing signs of stress, occasional poor filling of heads is visible. Clusters of reddish to blackish insects present on lower portions of the stalk.	Eastern half of the state	Chinch bugs
22. July, August, September	Small, grayish insects, similar in size and shape as chinch bugs, but color is different; feeding in the heads of developing sorghum.	Statewide	False chinch bugs

This leaflet is intended as a guide to the insect problems that are most commonly found in Kansas sorghum fields. Information on treatment guidelines and management approaches are available at your local Research and Extension office.

Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended,
nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

Publications from Kansas State University are available on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.oznet.ksu.edu>

Contents of this publication may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. All other rights reserved. In each case, credit
H. Leroy Brooks, Identifying Commonly Occurring Insect Problems in Sorghum Production, Kansas State University, October 1983.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

AF-109

October 1983

It is the policy of Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service that all persons shall have equal opportunity and access to its educational programs, services, activities, and materials without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age or disability. Kansas State University is an equal opportunity organization. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, Marc A. Johnson, Director.

File code: Entomology—2