

Best Management Practices

Armyworms

Background: Armyworms are stout-bodied, hairless, striped caterpillars that chew the foliage of grasses and grain crops. They are so named because of their habit of crawling in large numbers from field to field when they have exhausted their food supply. Several species of armyworms may attack turfgrasses. Homeowners and golf course superintendents are understandably concerned when their turf is literally mowed down by a mowing “army” of caterpillars that seems to appear overnight. These pests are sporadic, but have an ever-present potential for outbreaks.

There are three major species of armyworms that attack turf in the United States. “True” armyworm (*Pseudaletia unipuncta*), Fall armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*), and lawn armyworm (*Spodoptera mauritia*). “True” armyworms are especially fond of corn and small grains but will feed on all common turfgrasses. This species probably does not overwinter in the Northern half of the United States but annual infestations in the middle and northern parts of the United States result from the northward migrations of moths in the spring. These armyworms are gregarious and tend to feed as a group, devouring circular patches of turf before moving on to another food source. They tend to hide in the thatch during the day and most of the damage occurs at night.

Fall armyworms are similar to “True” armyworms but the damage they cause is more uniform over a broader area. These insects feed anytime during the day or night but move about mostly in the dark or early morning.

Lawn Armyworm is a major pest of bermuda grass in Hawaii. The injury is similar to that caused by the “true” and fall armyworm.

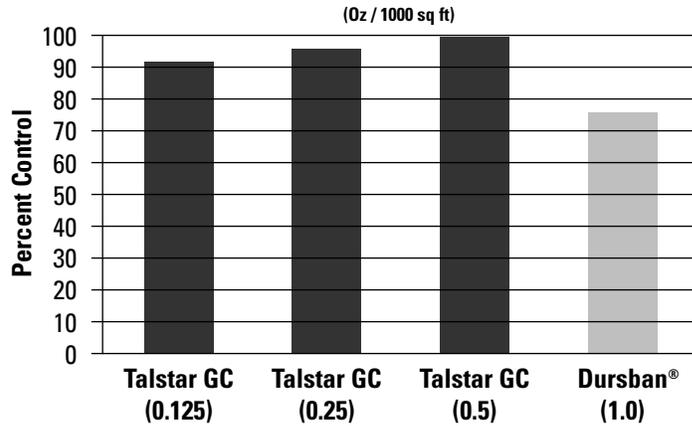
Description: Adult “true” armyworms are uniformly pale-brown to grayish brown with a wingspan of about 1.5 in. Adult fall armyworms and lawn armyworms are the same size as “true” armyworms but are dark gray. Adult moths generally remain hidden by day but become more active at night and are attracted to light. Newly hatched larvae are greenish, and older ones are 1.5 in. long and range in color from light tan to olive green to nearly black, and have stripes along the sides of their back. Fall army worms can be distinguished from true armyworms by the more prominent inverted Y-shaped marking on the front of the head and the presence of 4 distinct black tubercles on the back of each abdominal segment.

Management: Because the occurrence of armyworms is erratic, preventative treatments are rarely justified. In fact, blanket sprays may kill natural enemies that normally would keep armyworm populations in check. Armyworms are best controlled by spot-treatment on an “as needed” basis. To monitor for these pests, look for skeletonized or chewed leaves, piles of frass, or the worms themselves. Flocks of birds attracted to turf areas may indicate the presence of armyworms. Talstar® insecticides provide excellent control of armyworms at low application rates. Talstar® sprayable formulations (TalstarOne™ multi-insecticide and Talstar® GC flowable) should be applied at 0.25 oz./1000 sq ft for low cut turf. To ensure optimal control with sprayable formulations, delay watering (irrigation) or mowing for 24 hours after application. If the grass is being maintained at a mowing height greater than 1 inch or the pest pressure is high, apply TalstarOne™ or Talstar® GC flowable at 0.5 oz./1000 sq ft. For Talstar® granular formulations (Talstar® PL granular insecticide, Talstar® GC granular insecticide, Talstar® EZ granular insecticide, and

Talstar® EZ Golf granular insecticide) product should be applied at 1.15 lb/1000 sq.ft. and the treated area should be irrigated with up to 0.1 inches of water immediately after application. Continue to monitor after application as up to 5 generations of armyworms may occur in one season.

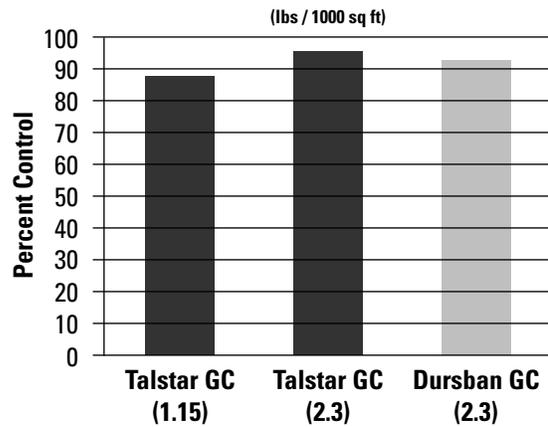
Control of Fall Armyworm with Talstar GC Flowable

Data from Rhode Island, Texas, South Carolina



Control of Fall Armyworm with Talstar GC Granular

Data from Rhode Island, Texas, South Carolina



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