

# LTA Turfgrass Insider

*Exclusive Information for LTA Members - August 8, 2011*

## CURRENT ISSUES FROM SUMMER 2011

### Caution!!!! Fall Armyworm Populations are Exploding

I am getting a lot of calls right now about armyworms. This is the peak time of the year for infestations and our sports fields and golf courses are serious targets. I have not had any calls concerning tropical sod webworms, last year's big story. Right now fall armyworms are doing the most damage.

**Fall armyworms (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) are popping up everywhere.** I have visited several sport fields that are battling armyworms in both southern and northern Louisiana. It seems like every year there is a soccer field establishing that gets an infestation. This year, a 7 acre soccer field in Central just out of Baton Rouge was completely wiped out. The population was biblical. The armyworms were even eating the flatsedge in the field. We are assisting Vidalia High School with their football field establishment. Sure enough, we got hit last week at this location as well. The soccer field in Central was wiped out but we caught Vidalia just before the armyworms caused severe problems.

### Where do armyworms come from?

The adult moth responsible for the armyworm is brown in color with a wingspan of 1 ½ inches wide. The eggs are laid on the leaves of the turfgrass in clusters but it is not unusual to see egg clusters on light colored objects near turf areas such as goal posts or fences. The eggs may hatch in as little as 2 days. The larvae can feed for 2 to 3 weeks causing severe turfgrass damage. Armyworms have chewing mouth parts that completely devour the leaves rendering large areas void of foliage. Eventually, the larvae burrow into the soil and pupate transforming into the adult moth. The process takes approximately 2 weeks. Fall armyworm larvae are 1 ½ inches long and black striped their entire body length. They may be black in color to green. However, the most distinguishing characteristic is the inverted Y on its head.



Birds are active in fields that have fall armyworms



Look for the inverted Y on the armyworm's head



Armyworm damage in a soccer field near Baton Rouge

Inspect your fields especially if you see an unusual number of birds congregating in turf areas. The football field in Vidalia had birds a week or so before we noticed armyworm damage on the field. Spray the field as soon as you can because it does not take long for a disaster to occur.

Table below provides effective control options for fall armyworms infesting turfgrass.

Insecticide	Common Trade Name(s)
bifenthrin	Talstar, Quali-Pro Golf and Nursery
carbaryl	Sevin, Carbaryl
Chlorantraniliprole	Acelepryn
halofenozide	Mach 2, Macho
trichlorfon	Dylox

**Lingering Chinch Bug Problems**

The southern chinch bug has been tough this year on St. Augustinegrass. The problem has been exacerbated by the severe spring/summer drought. The drought has lessened in several areas of the state but we are still below normal and may be entering another dry pattern. Heavy irrigation or rainfall suppresses chinch bug populations and definitely reduces damage caused by the insect. Greater chinch bug damage has been linked to turfgrasses that are highly fertilized with nitrogen. I am still visiting yards with severe populations here in early August.

We normally have 3 to 4 generations of chinch bugs in a season. Females start laying their eggs in the spring often between the leaf sheath and stem of the St. Augustinegrass. Eggs hatch in 10 days and the young develop to adults in 3 weeks. Nymphs begin feeding on the tender portions of the grass stems immediately. It is the nymphs that cause the most damage because they clog up the conductive tissues of turfgrass preventing water and nutrients from reaching the leaves of new shoots. Chinch bug damage is due not just to the direct effects of feeding, but also to phytotoxic effects of their saliva. Damage first appears as yellowed areas but the damage usually escalates to enlarged brown or dead spots. Also, damage usually begins near concrete slabs in full sun water stressed areas.



Adult chinch bugs mainly infest St. Augustinegrass



Damage shows up first as yellowed turfgrass

The following table provides control options for chinch bugs infesting turfgrass

Insecticide	Common Trade Name(s)
bifenthrin	Talstar, Quali-Pro Golf and Nursery
carbaryl	Sevin, Carbaryl
Dinotefuran	Zylam
thiamethoxam	Meridian

I have found that just looking carefully through the grass may not turn up chinch bugs. The best way to look for chinch bugs is to use a lemon soap solution. It is really pretty simple. Just squirt about an ounce or so of a lemony dishwashing liquid in a couple of gallons of water and pour it in a transition area (damaged turf transitioning to good turf). Chinch bugs are irritated by the soapy water and should start moving giving you a better idea about the population. This works for armyworms as well. The armyworms present in the area will go crazy. As I mentioned last year, you might as well start carrying dishwashing soap and a bucket in your truck.



**Use a soapy water solution to stimulate chinch bug movement in suspected areas**

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