Black Armyworm adult

Scientific Name: *Spodoptera exempta* (Walker)
Common Name: African Armyworm, Black Armyworm, Nutgrass Armyworm, True Armyworm, Hail Worm, Mystery Armyworm, Rain Worm,
Description:
Eggs: Pale-yellowish and becomes dark brown just before hatching. The black head-capsules of the larvae can be seen through the shells. Each egg is about 0.5 mm in diameter, conical with a slightly rounded apex and a densely sculpted surface;

Larvae: Develops from grey-green with white-yellow stripes down its back when small, to black with thin blue lines down the middle of the back and yellow-green lines outside the blue lines when fully grown. It measures 2 to 3cm long, has a velvety-black upper surface with pale lateral lines, a green or yellow ventral surface, and no hairs on the body. There are three parallel lines on the dorsal surface of the prothoracic (first body) segment and a stripe running longitudinally down the mid-dorsal surface of the body is always paler than the black pigmentation on either side of it. The head is always shiny-black;

Pupa: Mahogany-brown, 10-14mm long, with a smooth, shiny surface;

Adult: It is 14-18mm long and has a 29-32mm wing span. The abdomen is covered with pale grey-brown scales (except for the tip in the female which has black hair-scales). Forewings are dark-brown with distinctive grey-black markings. Hindwings are white with dark veins.

Plant Affected: Rice

Symptoms

Gross feeding damage to foliage, growing points, and young stems. Severe infestation results in total defoliation or destruction of the plant to ground level.

Treatment

Many animals, birds and insects prey on the African armyworm at different stages of its life cycle. These natural enemies should be encouraged by maintaining natural surroundings with plenty of breeding places for them, including trees and shrubs.

Night birds and bats feed on the African armyworm moths, and lacewings, wasps, parasitic wasps and spiders eat the caterpillars; Avoid burning and overgrazing of grasslands which are the natural habitat and food store of the caterpillars. Burning often causes outbreaks because as soon as temperatures rise, eggs are laid in large quantities on the fresh new grass.