

# Too Early To Think About Cutworms?



**DR. SCOTT STEWART**

**JACKSON, TENN.**

I've had a couple of calls related to the use of insecticides for cutworms. No-till and late burndown applications that allow weeds to persist in the field are factors that increase the chances of cutworm infestations. It is

best to maintain a clean seedbed for at least two and preferably three weeks prior to planting. This will go a long way in eliminating the chances of cutworm problems, but it is sometimes easier said than done.

A relatively low rate of a pyrethroid insecticide is commonly suggested to prevent cutworm damage. **However, I do not recommend including an insecticide with herbicide applications that are made more than two weeks in advance of planting.** Tank mixing an insecticide with an early burndown application does not make much sense. Cutworms you kill would have probably 'cycled out' before you planted anyhow. And because you cannot expect much residual control, there is the possibility of reinfestation between application and planting. The best time to make this application is just before or at planting (or within a day or two after planting).

**A few other points for your consideration:**

- No insecticide seed treatments should be expected to provide substantial control of cutworms.

- Although Bt corn and cotton traits provide some protection against cutworms, planting into fields that are heavily infested is a risky business. Herculex, VT3 Pro, VT2 Pro and SmartStax corn can reduce cutworm injury, and I would expect the same from the Viptera technology. In cotton, WideStrike will suppress cutworm injury better than Bollgard II. However, large larvae are much less susceptible to Bt toxins. So, if populations are high enough, I suspect any Bt technology can be overwhelmed.



- Ammo 2.5 EC and its generic equivalents (e.g., Up-Cyde) are not labeled for use in corn or soybean.

- Pounce 3.2 EC and its generic equivalents (e.g., Arctic) are not labeled for use in cotton. Δ

*DR. SCOTT STEWART: IPM Extension Specialist, University of Tennessee*