

Ag Column
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Fall Armyworms Devastating Grasses in Fields and Lawns

Whoa! What's eating my grass? If you notice your hay field or your lawn browning over the past few days, you may need to look for armyworms.

Earlier in the summer, the worms can be more difficult to spot in the lawn or field. Dr. Frank Hale, UT Extension Entomologist, says you can do a simple test to determine if they are present. Pour soapy water over small 2 foot by 2 foot areas. If the fall armyworms are present, the soapy water will force them to move upward. They will be much easier to see.

Fall armyworms can cause significant damage to forage grasses and lawn grasses in just a few days. At first, you may just think that your grass is browning from the summer drought. If you don't treat the area, the armyworms can completely devour a lawn or field. Amazingly, one field or lawn can be totally devastated while the adjacent area is unaffected.

They can be anywhere from gray to green. They will develop from an egg to a larvae, which causes the feeding damage, to a moth in 4 to 5 weeks. As the moths continue their flight and lay new eggs, these pests move from the west to the east.

The pests start their movement each year in Texas where they can overwinter. We typically won't see them until sometime in July here in Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia.

For more information, you can check our UT Extension Sullivan County Facebook post. If you have additional questions or need recommendations on controlling fall armyworms, call our office at 423-574-1919.

Photo with credit below



Picture by Jake Mallard