

FALL ARMYWORM ON THE MARCH



Fall armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) is now considered established in Australia. It has been detected at several sites in Queensland and in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. According to the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, suspect moths have been confirmed at several locations by DAF entomologists as fall armyworm, including near sugarcane regions at the Burdekin, Mackay and Bundaberg. The situation continues to change quickly, but at the time of writing it had not been confirmed in sugarcane in Australia.

Fall armyworm is an invasive pest and its caterpillar stage feeds on more than 350 plant species, and impacts cultivated grasses such as maize, rice, sorghum, sugarcane and wheat, as well as fruit and vegetable and cotton crops. Fall armyworm is native to tropical and subtropical regions of the Americas, and since 2016 has spread to Africa, the Indian subcontinent, China and South East Asia.

Adult moths are highly mobile and can fly long distances (up to 200km). This pest is also prolific, reproducing at a rate of several generations per year. Australia's

climate and the production of suitable hosts are favourable for fall armyworm to establish and spread. Australia's environment and native flora may also be impacted.

DAF Queensland is continuing to undertake surveillance across key farming areas. The National Management Group has determined that it is not technically feasible to eradicate fall armyworm from Australia.

SRA and industry partners have worked with the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) on emergency use permits for selected insecticides to control fall armyworm. At the time of publication, two of these permits had been approved. Please continue to check the SRA website for the latest information.

These permits allow a person to use the specified insecticide product(s) on sugarcane in the manner specified in Queensland and New South Wales.

Correct identification of the insect is essential to ensure that the target pest is fall armyworm. Overuse (or use when not required) of these products could potentially lead to insecticide resistance

and have a detrimental impact on natural enemies or beneficial insects and the environment.

Before considering the use of any of these chemical insecticides you should always check the APVMA website (apvma.gov.au/) and the individual product label for more detailed information before considering which product to use. ■

If you suspect fall armyworm, report immediately to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries on 132 523.

Please continue to visit the SRA website for updated information on fall armyworm.

At time of publication, there have been no confirmed detections of fall armyworm in sugarcane but growers should remain vigilant with plant cane and when we head into the spring period.