

# COMBATING ALFALFA WEEVIL

***Alfalfa weevil can be one of the most damaging insect pests to an alfalfa stand. Outbreaks can greatly reduce forage yield and quality which is why it is extremely important to educate yourself on how to identify and manage this insect in your fields this spring.***

Alfalfa weevil overwinters as Brown Snout Beetle, and emerges in the spring as temperatures start to warm. This is when the adults chew holes in an alfalfa stem and lay their eggs. The eggs take approximately 1-2 weeks to hatch. The newly hatched larvae will cause the most damage to your alfalfa because upon hatching, they move up the plant and feed on the leaves. Newly hatched larvae are very small and appear to be yellowish-green with black heads. As they grow and feed on the plant for 2-3 weeks, they get larger and lighter in colour and they develop a white stripe down their back. (Figure 1.)



Figure 1. Alfalfa Weevil



Figure 2. Alfalfa weevil feeding damage

It is important to take the time to scout your alfalfa stands and identify whether alfalfa weevil is going to reduce your first cut yield. Be sure to walk your fields and watch for damaged alfalfa, there will be small holes in the leaves if alfalfa weevil has been feeding on your crop. (Figure 2) If you suspect that the insects have been feeding on your crop, the most effective way to scout for alfalfa weevil is to randomly select a few locations in your field and at each location, cut approximately 30 stems at the base of the plant. Invert the cut stems into a white pail and shake the stems against the pail and count the number of larvae that fall into the pail. If you do find alfalfa weevil in your alfalfa field, the most common and effective control method to limit alfalfa yield and quality loss is to consider harvesting early. You may also consider using chemical control on your alfalfa field to control the damage if there are more than 10 days until harvest and:

- You find more than 1 larva per stem is found and alfalfa is < 40 cm in height
- 40% or more of stems show signs feeding and the alfalfa stand is < 40 cm in height

Tooker, J. 2013. Alfalfa Weevil. PennState University

Beauzay, P., Knodel, J., Ganeshiarachchi, G. Integrated Pest Management of Alfalfa Weevil in North Dakota. North Dakota State University.

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