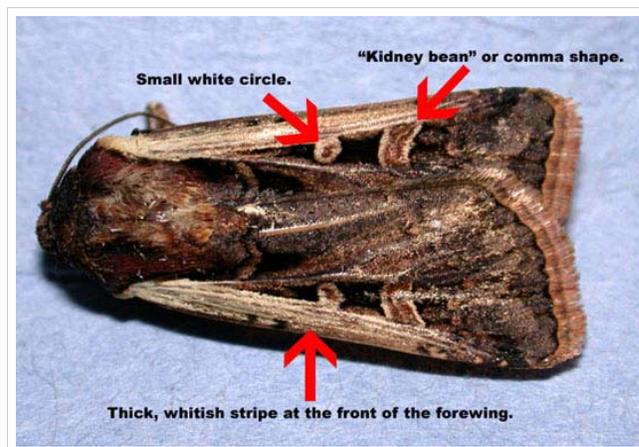


Western Bean Cutworm

Striacosta albicosta (Smith)

Appearance and Life History



Moth and identifying characteristics.

Photo by J. Obermeyer

The Western Bean Cutworm is a native of North America that has recently expanded its range eastward from the Great Plains region. Following its initial discovery in southeastern Iowa in 2004, it was found the following year in western Illinois and in northwestern Indiana in 2006. Although primarily known a pest of field corn in many areas, its broad host range also includes legumes and it can be a pest of dryland beans (but not soybeans), where they are grown in abundance. It is not a true "cutworm" in that it feeds on the reproductive parts of the plants, and not by cutting stems as many cutworms do. The western bean cutworm is a late-season pest and its feeding can cause both yield loss and degrade quality of grain.

One generation occurs each year. Moths are primarily grayish-brown in color with a wing-span of approximately 1-1/2". The primary identifying characteristics are a whitish stripe at the front of the forewing with two cream-colored, outlined shapes immediately behind. Other identifying marks are a circular spot approximately halfway along the length of the forewing and a kidney-shaped mark along the same line, approximately 2/3 of the way to the wingtip.

Moth emergence begins in early July and usually peaks in the middle of the month, when male moths can be monitored using pheromone traps. Female moths will mate and lay eggs during July and August and will oviposit on a variety of cultivated and wild plants, although dryland beans and field corn are the most commonly chosen oviposition sites. Cornfields in the late whorl stage are preferred by female moths, who are seeking to lay eggs on corn that is near (but not past) pollination. Eggs will be laid on upper surfaces of leaves, often on leaves near the whorl that have not unfolded completely and vertical in orientation. Eggs are laid in masses of 20-200, but usually average around 50. Eggs are white when first laid, and become tan as eggs begin to develop. In about a week, eggs develop a purple coloration, indicating that hatch is imminent.



Freshly laid egg mass next to pollen and anther from the tassel.

Photo by J. Obermeyer



Developing egg mass.

Photo by J. Obermeyer