

How to identify...

Fall armyworm

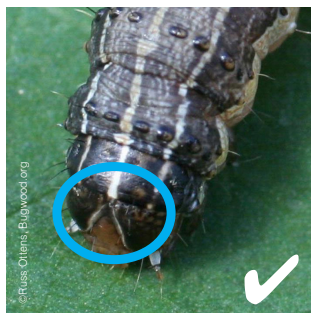
Fall armyworm or 'American armyworm' is a new pest in Africa that is currently attacking maize. This pest originates from the Americas, but it has recently been found in several countries in West and Southern Africa.

This guide will help you to recognize fall armyworm and tell it apart from similar caterpillars such as other armyworms, stalk borers and cut worms.

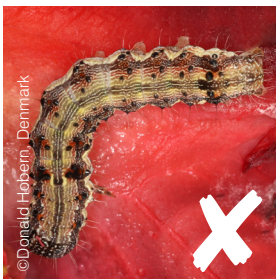
IDENTIFICATION

Half-grown or fully grown caterpillars are the easiest to identify. Fall armyworm caterpillars have a characteristic pattern of dark pimples (spots) on their backs, each spot has a short bristle (hair). Although the skin looks rough it is smooth to the touch.

Look out for four dark spots forming a square on the second to last segment (red circle). Each of the other body segments also has four spots, but they do not form a square pattern (yellow circle). The head is dark and shows a characteristic upside down Y-shaped pale marking on the front (blue circle).



Other armyworms, maize stem borer and cotton bollworm



The **cotton bollworm** (*Helicoverpa armigera*) often shows a similar pattern of dots on its back, but its head is usually paler, and although they can also show an inverted Y this is usually a similar colour to the rest of the head. Unlike the fall armyworm they feel rough to the touch due to tiny spines.



African armyworm
Spodoptera exempta



Beet armyworm
Spodoptera exigua



African cotton leafworm
Spodoptera littoralis



Spotted stem borer
Chilo partellus



African maize stalk borer
Busseola fusca

Damage caused by Fall armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*)



The caterpillars are mainly found feeding on young maize plants, but they can also attack a range of other crops including millet, sorghum, rice, wheat, sugar cane and vegetables.

- Fall armyworm caterpillars feed inside funnels on young plants.
- Early feeding can appear to be similar to other stem borers.
- Leaf damage is usually characterized by ragged feeding, and moist sawdust-like frass near the funnels and upper leaves of the plant.
- Deep feeding in the funnel may destroy developing tassels.
- Caterpillars enter through the side of the ear and feed on developing kernels. This is different to stem borers which usually enter from the top or bottom of the ear.

ACTION

How can you help combatting Fall armyworm?

- Please take close up photographs (from above) of the head and tail of the caterpillar and send them to:

- Please provide us with information about the date you took the photo, the location and the crop.
- If your device has GPS please send also the coordinates.
- If fall armyworm has not been recorded from your country before, it will be necessary to send samples to a diagnostic facility for identification. Caterpillars should ideally be placed in alcohol to preserve them (70% or above). However, any clear strong alcohol is preferred over water.
- Please contact your local diagnostic facility or agricultural office for instructions on how to send samples (details below).

For more information contact: