

Potential impact of fall armyworm on cotton

Fall armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) is an exotic pest that has been detected in Queensland.

Based on overseas experience, fall armyworm larvae can cause significant crop damage if left unchecked.

Adults can fly long distances and migrate quickly, particularly with the aid of weather patterns and jet streams. Check crops regularly to detect the early stages of infestation.

Pest risk

At this early stage, it is difficult to know if fall armyworm will be a significant pest of cotton in Australia.

Whilst not registered for the control of *Spodoptera* species, the Bollgard 3 varieties that are widely grown, are expected to provide incidental suppression of this pest. The incidence of this pest may be similar to the native cluster caterpillar, *Spodoptera litura*, which can cause limited damage to tropical cotton crops in some seasons.

Similar to the United States of America, fall armyworm is expected to be more prevalent in Australia's tropical regions and could be less frequent in temperate areas further south.

Appearance

Fall armyworm looks similar to other species of *Spodoptera* already present in Australia. In particular, it has a similar appearance to lawn armyworm (*S. mauritia*) and day-feeding armyworm (*S. exempta*), which are not found in cotton.

Cluster caterpillar (*S. litura*) is native to Australia and can be a minor pest of cotton, but is easily distinguished from fall armyworm.

Cotton Info's [Insect ID Guide](#) provides a detailed guide to identifying fall armyworm.



From Endemics to Exotics

Identifying cluster caterpillar, northern armyworm and fall armyworm

Proper identification is important for knowing if the insect in your field is of economic importance. The correct identification of a pest allows for:

- Appropriate management practices to be implemented, and
- Early identification and detection of potential exotic pests, enabling successful containment and eradication procedures.

Key features to look throughout its lifecycle can assist with making a correct identification. While a photo is worth a thousand words, ensuring you read the description of symptoms and visual appearance can help differentiate between similar looking appearances.

If you suspect you have detected fall armyworm, contact the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline.



**EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE
1800 084 881**

What should I look for?

You should look for the presence of larvae that may be hatching on masses from egg clusters.

It is expected with the control offered by Bollgard 3™, cotton should suppress the survival of the larvae. However, you should be vigilant in monitoring crops for excessive leaf damage and fruiting sites feeding. If damage does appear, it is important to obtain a clear identification of the larvae species likely to be causing the damage.

How can I manage an outbreak?

Early detection is essential. Regularly check all your crops for insects and damage. Pheromone traps may provide an indication of local fall armyworm activity.

It is recommended to control weeds, volunteer cotton or ratoon cotton plants in fallow fields, and in areas around the field, sheds and fence lines to reduce the number of host plants available for pest populations to establish and build.

Key to the control of any pest is an integrated pest management approach. The Department, in collaboration with industry, is working to identify strategies and tactics for the medium to long-term management.

It is essential with any pesticide use for fall armyworm control that the implications for chemical resistance development in other pests that may be exposed are considered (e.g. *Helicoverpa*, mites, aphids), and the potential impact on natural enemies.

The APVMA is currently assessing, as a priority, applications for permits for the use of chemicals against fall armyworm in cotton. To check for the latest chemical permits applying to fall armyworm, use the [APVMA's permit portal](#)—search for ‘fall armyworm’ and check the ‘pest/purpose’ button.

Advanced search ▲

Search terms include Filter on Date

Permit number
 Description
 Active constituent
 Pest / purpose
 Animal / crop

You should already have strong on-farm biosecurity measures to protect your crops from pest and diseases and should implement good farm hygiene for weed control to remove hosts that could build populations. More information is available at farmbiosecurity.com.au.

What should I do?

Be on the lookout and if you suspect fall armyworm, report immediately to the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries on **13 25 23**.

More information

For more information, contact the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries on **13 25 23** or visit business.qld.gov.au/fallarmyworm