

## Crop Alert

June 12, 2025

# Cornell Cooperative Extension Delaware County

## Protecting Your Corn Yield – Scout Now

Walking your corn fields can feel like wasting time when everything needs to be done at once. In a year when many corn fields will be planted late and hay harvest has been delayed; our early planted corn fields take on a big value. Protecting this investment is important to having the feed we want this fall.

Doing a stand count is a good place to start, even if it's kinda informal. (Count the number of plants in 17'5" and multiply by 1000 to get plants per acre.) Look for damaged or missing plants, judge the uniformity of the stand, how did your corn planter perform? While you're doing this insect and weed issues will be easy to notice.

### **Cutworm (Cutworm damage is happening in our region and around the state right now!)**

Black cutworm a common pest found in corn. The adults (moths) migrate into the state from the southern overwintering sites on the spring storms and are attracted to weeds on which they lay their eggs. Cutworm larvae are large (1 to 2 inches long when fully grown), smooth, dull-colored caterpillars, which curl tightly when handled. They hide in the soil during the day and feed at night at the base of small corn plants. Symptoms include missing, cut, or wilted plants. Damage from small cutworms can appear as rows of small holes across leaves of small corn plants. The large, nearly mature larvae do most of the feeding damage. Each one is capable of destroying several plants, and damage may appear very suddenly as the larvae grow larger.

The key to cutworm control is to monitor emerging plants closely, particularly in fields with conditions favoring cutworm outbreaks. Check fields as corn emerges until plants are well established for signs of missing, cut, or wilted plants. Search for the larvae in the soil near damaged plants. Application of soil insecticides at planting does not provide effective control of cutworms. Cutworm larvae can only be easily controlled while small – 1/2 inch long or less. Since the larvae are active at night, treatments should be applied late in the day.

### **Weed Scouting**

Weedy fields will steal yield from your crop. Most fields will have received some sort of pre-emergence treatment, but we all know that weed escapes are common. The adage about a stitch-in-time holds here. Small weeds are easier to control, and the longer they compete with the crop, the more damage they will cause. Walking fields now will help you catch problems while you have options for control.

### **Does Your Corn Need Sidedress N?**

This is hard to judge by scouting, but yellowish plants may be a clue. Ask a nutrient management planner or crop advisor to help you evaluate your manure and upfront fertilizer to see if you have enough N. The wet weather this spring also probably has affected N from at-planting fertilizer applications. Timely sidedress N, where you need it, is important for assuring optimum yields. We recommend sidedress applications just as the plants canopy in, this is the stage when N demand revs up, and the closed canopy helps reduce N loss.

