

COVER CROPS AND INSECT MANAGEMENT



scouting
with a loupe

Insect pest populations are dynamic and fluctuate from year to year and within different cropping systems. Adding a cover crop to a rotation will likely change these dynamics. To reduce (not eliminate) the chance of unexpected damage when cover crops are added, the nuances of crop production and pest management need to be examined. Regular field scouting will greatly decrease the risk of economic damage and in most situations provide proper timing for a rescue treatment. For some insects (seed corn maggot, white grubs, wireworms), only preventive treatments are effective.

Field scouting is the backbone of any pest management program and provides basic information needed for good management decisions. Weekly scouting is suggested for field crops (for higher value crops, increased frequency may be necessary). When scouting, walk a W-shaped pattern to make sure a representative portion of the field is monitored. In some cases, insects are more commonly found on field edges or may be migrating in from other fields or non-crop areas, so be sure to scout those areas as well. Building a field history and understanding pest biology can also help make more effective pest management decisions. Some helpful resources include:

- The *Wisconsin Field Crop Scout Training Manual* provides basic information on identification, life cycle, and scouting information.
- *A3646 Pest Management in Wisconsin Field Crops* provides information on current management practices, including economic thresholds and pesticide recommendations.
- The *Wisconsin Pest Bulletin* and *Wisconsin Crop Manager* are two free electronic newsletters that provide information on insect presence and abundance on a weekly basis during the field season.