

Grasshoppers are hatching in northeast Colorado

Written by Assefa Gebre-Amlak, CSU Extension

The 2012 grasshopper hazard map, based on the 2011 survey of adult grasshopper activity conducted by USDA-APHIS-PPQ shows that there will be low to moderate grasshopper populations in northeastern Colorado with the exception of small localized spots with higher risks in around Logan, Weld and Yuma counties respectively.

We are seeing hatching of grasshoppers in the Front Range areas as well as northeastern Colorado. Weather conditions will determine how much of the damage potential will be realized in those high risk areas.

For example, cool, wet conditions after hatch can result in enough mortality in immature grasshoppers to prevent an outbreak. In addition, if adequate moisture is available, forage regrowth will offset much of the grasshopper damage. Most grasshopper outbreaks occur when drought conditions are prevalent.

Landowners in high risk areas should start monitoring grasshopper populations in rangeland soon after grasshoppers hatch, primarily during late May and June. Early scouting is important because treatments are most effective when grasshoppers are small. The goal of scouting is to get an estimate of grasshoppers per square yard, as well as their stage of development.

The simple economic threshold for grasshoppers in rangeland is 15-20 grasshopper nymphs per square yard. This number is equivalent of 8-10 adult grasshoppers per square yard. However, the economic importance of an infestation is affected by such factors as range condition, cattle prices and treatment costs.

CARMA is a computer program that allows the landowners to include these factors in their treatment decisions.

Treatment options for grasshopper management are based on the Reduced Agent and Area Treatment (RAAT) strategy, which results in untreated swaths and swaths treated with reduced chemical rates.

Using lower rates and leaving untreated areas reduces treatment costs by as much as 50 percent and preserves biological control. Grasshoppers move constantly, insuring that they will enter a treated swath and that levels of control will be similar to complete coverage applications.

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Large infestations can be treated aerially with malathion, carbaryl or diflubenzuron (Dimilin). Smaller infestations can be controlled with RAAT treatments applied aerially or with all-terrain vehicles appropriately equipped to apply carbaryl or diflubenzuron. These insecticides do not have grazing restrictions when used in the rangeland.

All-terrain vehicles also can be used for spot treatments of egg-laying sites such as pastures, ditches and untilled field margins. Grasshopper nymphs tend to remain concentrated in their hatching areas for some time after they emerge, where the application of an approved insecticide can provide effective and economical control of localized infestations.

Dimilin (diflubenzuron) treatment for grasshoppers should be applied in second to third instar stage because growth regulator will not control adults. This product has no grazing restrictions.

Strategies for managing grasshoppers in cropland are somewhat different. Recommendations for specific crops can be found in the High Plains Integrated Pest Management Guide at www.highplainsipm.org.

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