

Burrus Buzz

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Scouting for "Subsequent Generation" European Corn Borer

by Matt Montgomery

First generation European corn borer makes for some pretty easy scouting. You simply look for shot holes in whorl leaves and periodically pluck the whorl looking for the growth stage of larvae. Better yet, you get to do that while walking outside through knee tall corn usually under a blue sky. More often than not, you get a light breeze to boot. Unfortunately, the generation/generations coming after that don't have all those perks. Second/subsequent generations of corn borer require the crop scout to look for quarter inch sized egg masses and, by then, the corn is better than head tall. It is usually hot, it can be muggy, and sometimes it's just a miserable chore.

It is of little wonder that even well trained crop scouts have a hard time detecting what can still be a yield-reducing pest in non-GM corn. Where the industry once thought corn borer to be "old news," we now realize that it is "still news." Burrus even has the surveys to prove it. Each season, Burrus Account Managers examine indicator hybrids that we distribute in our multi-state show plot system. They rate the level of corn borer pressure as being low (1-5 borer infested plants per 25 surveyed plants), medium (6-10 borer infested plants per 25 surveyed plants), and high (11-25 borer infested plants per 25 plants). By examining their survey results over the last several years, Burrus has come to a few important conclusions. First, Burrus has concluded that corn borers have reached a new equilibrium point. They are surviving in enough additional non-corn host plant material that they now typically infest about 10 to 15 percent of surveyed corn (see Figure 1). Second, Burrus has mapped the area more prone to second/subsequent generation corn borer infestations (see Figure 2).

Our survey results indicate that corn borer is still a potentially destructive pest in some portions of the Burrus footprint (north central Missouri, western Illinois, southeast Iowa, and the Illinois River valley). Growers in these areas must always consider corn borer when making their hybrid decisions. At the very least, growers in those areas must be prepared to scout. Those interested in trying their hand at scouting for the second generation may want to watch last year's Burrus Agronomy U session on European corn borer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1QvlzQ0TW0>. The session briefly describes the egg-scouting technique used for second/subsequent generation corn borer and it also provides threshold guidance.

Figure 1. Percent Plants Moderately to Severely Infested with European Corn Borer (ECB) (2008 - 2014 Preliminary)

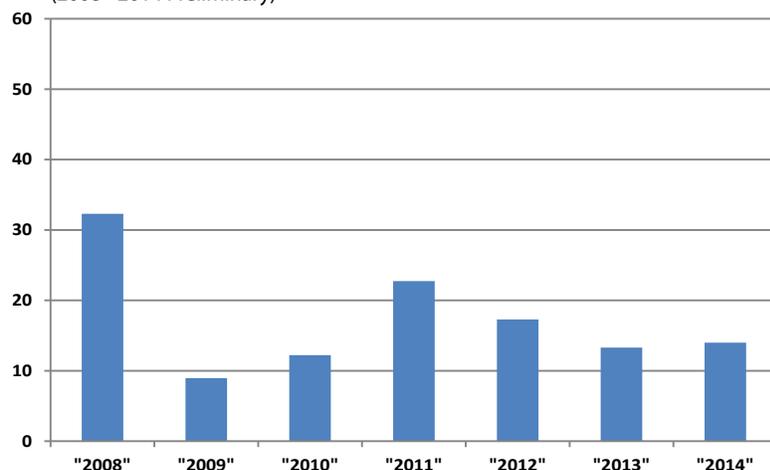


Figure 2.

