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Stop Scouting When...

A wise entomologist told me this summer if someone told me they had all the answers about fall armyworms - don't believe them. After another summer of feeding damage, I understand a little more about his claims of their unpredictability.

By this time of summer/fall, you'd think we'd be well past additional feeding injury. Conventional wisdom for a non-overwintering pest such as this would suggest they might be out of here by mid-October – and maybe they will be – but don't stop scouting just yet.

One of the things we *do* know about fall armyworms is they don't survive freezing temperatures. They overwinter only in areas with suitable host plants and where temperatures rarely fall below 50 degrees F. With that in mind, even if you don't like colder temperatures, you might embrace them at least a little if you are ready for fall armyworm season to be done.

Unfortunately, those temperatures aren't coming as quickly as we'd like to see for this pest. While historical averages say we typically see frost in the next couple weeks and a freeze by early November, climate prediction models suggest a 60-80 percent chance of *above* normal temperatures through October – and at least the potential for additional fall feeding.

Ultimately, it means you can start scouting when...we reach freezing. Until then, there's an opportunity for additional generations. They may not be as large in number as previous ones and development will likely be slower for those that are here, but it doesn't mean giving up scouting altogether. Tender brome regrowth and newly seeded grass crops will be particularly attractive sites for egg laying. Local pheromone trap numbers have been low for a couple of weeks, and while that's a good thing, it doesn't mean scouting shouldn't continue. Forages trying to recover prior and newly seeded grasses trying to get established before dormancy need the right combination of factors to come together to help them survive the winter. Being consumed by fall armyworms is not part of that right combination.

It's a broken record, but one that still has to be played. Recent moisture has helped kick off some stand recovery. As you're monitoring that recovery, it's a great time to monitor the potential for additional fall armyworm feeding as well. With any luck, it won't be an issue, but better safe than sorry.