



PestFacts WA

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Armyworm update

- Condingup
- Beaumont



Armyworm caterpillars. Photo courtesy of Sam Stubna (South East Rural Traders).

Armyworm caterpillars have been found in wheat and barley crops near Condingup and Beaumont. There were up to 4 caterpillars per square meter in patches across paddocks. In some cases, they were defoliating the flag leaf (image below).



Visible armyworm caterpillar feeding damage on flag leaves. Photo courtesy of Sam Stubna (South East Rural Traders).

Armyworm caterpillars are most damaging in barley crops close to harvest, so growers are encouraged to monitor cereal crops and correctly identify armyworm caterpillars from other caterpillars that occur in cereals, such as fall armyworm and native budworm. The [PestFacts WA Reporter app](#) can be used to request a free diagnosis of caterpillars found in paddocks.

Biology and feeding symptoms



The collar of the armyworm has three parallel white lines, as circled (left). The native budworm caterpillar's collar does not have this pattern (right).

Armyworm caterpillars have smooth bodies and can be distinguished from other caterpillars by the three parallel white stripes on the collar just behind the head.

The first visible sign of armyworm caterpillars is often their green or straw-coloured droppings, about the size of a match head, found on the ground between cereal rows.

When barley crops are maturing in spring, large armyworm caterpillars climb plants and can chew through the green stems, causing heads to fall to the ground. Damage to wheat and oat crops is generally less severe than barley. Wheat is less susceptible because of its thicker stems, while the number of panicles on oat plants help compensate from feeding damage. However, substantial feeding on the flag leaf during grain fill may still affect yield.

Monitoring and management

Growers are encouraged to monitor their paddocks for armyworm caterpillars.

Assessing the number of armyworm caterpillars in a cereal crop can be difficult, as their movements between the ground and canopy vary according to weather conditions and feeding behaviour. At times, caterpillars may be found sheltering on the ground beneath leaf litter, while on other days they can be located higher in the crop canopy or on the heads, where they can be more easily collected using a sweep net. Larger caterpillars often prefer to hide during the day and feed at night.

In mature barley crops, the economic threshold is 1 to 3 large caterpillars per square metre before insecticide spraying is considered. If the barley crop is beginning to hay off, continue checking daily until the crop reaches full maturity, as head lopping by caterpillars can be unpredictable.

The threshold for wheat and oats is higher, at approximately 5 large caterpillars per square meter. This is because armyworm generally consume grain in these crops, and heads are rarely severed and dropped. The economic threshold of oats is therefore similar to that for wheat.

Armyworm caterpillars are more likely to be on stems during the early evening, making it easy to underestimate numbers when monitoring during the day. Monitoring is most effectively undertaken using a sweep net. As a guide, 10 sweeps are approximately equivalent to sampling 10 square metres of crop, with one sweep representing about one square metre.

When using a sweep net, be aware that armyworm caterpillars are often located lower in the canopy and may not always be captured effectively. To avoid underestimating populations, also inspect the lower canopy.

Several effective insecticides are registered for the control of armyworm if required. However, their effectiveness depends on good penetration into the crop canopy. This can be difficult to achieve in high-yielding crops with dense canopies, particularly when caterpillars are resting under leaf litter at the base of plants. Spraying late in the afternoon or evening is recommended, as armyworm are predominately night feeders.

If applying insecticide, be mindful of harvest chemical withholding periods and always check product labels before spraying. For more insecticide information, refer to DPIRD's [2026 Winter Spring Insecticide Guide](#).

If spraying, growers should consider using insecticides that are less harmful to beneficial predator insects. For information on insecticide toxicity to beneficial insects, refer to Cesar Australia's [Beneficials Chemical Toxicity Table](#).

More information

To read about earlier armyworm activity reported this season, refer to the 2026 PestFacts WA Issue 11 article [Armyworm and brown pasture loopers are causing damage](#).

For more information on armyworm, refer to DPIRD's Armyworms and their management in cereal crops factsheet.

For more information, refer contact Senior Research Scientist Svetlana Micic in Albany on +61 8 9892 8591.

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Ascochyta blight and botrytis grey mould in lentils

Ascochyta blight

- Grass Patch
- Scaddan



Ascochyta blight symptoms on lentil leaves.

Senior Research Scientist Andrea Hills (DPIRD) recently found *Ascochyta* blight in flowering Bolt and Thunder lentil crops near Grass Patch and Scaddan.

Ascochyta blight is caused by the fungus *Ascochyta lentis* and this pathogen can survive in infected seed for several years, and in previously infected lupin stubble. Previously infected lupin stubble produces spores that can be spread to plants through rain splash. Subsequent in-crop infection and spread occurs when inoculum is moved higher in the canopy or to surrounding plants by wind or rain splash during wet weather.

Wet conditions late in the season provide ideal conditions for pod infection which can result in seed discoloration.

Identification

Ascochyta blight can infect all above-ground parts of lentil plants at any growth stage, from seedlings to maturity. The disease produces light grey spots that develop into tan lesions with dark brown margins. A key identifying feature is the presence of tiny black fruiting bodies (pycnidia) within the lesion centres.

Severe infections can cause premature leaf drop, stem dieback and a general blighted appearance. Infection of pods may lead to infected and discoloured seed which affects seed quality and marketability. Affected seed often shows brown surface patches, while heavily infected seed becomes purplish-brown, shrivelled and smaller than healthy seed. However, some infected seed may appear symptomless.

Management

Early in the season growers can manage this disease by sowing clean seed (less than 5% *Ascochyta* infection), using a registered seed treatment, paddock rotation (avoiding planting near infected stubble), optimum time of sowing to reduce infection risk, and growing resistant varieties.

The key to a successful *Ascochyta* spray program is regular monitoring combined with timely application of registered fungicides in areas of high risk or when a susceptible variety is grown. Most fungicides are protectants and are only effective if applied before disease development. For more fungicide information, refer to DPIRD's Fungicides page.

No confirmed cases of *Ascochyta* blight with reduced fungicide sensitivity or resistance have been reported in Australian lentil crops. Growers and consultants that suspect fungicide resistance in *Ascochyta* blight is occurring in a crop can contact the Centre for Crop and Disease Management's (CCDM) fungicide resistance team by emailing frg@curtin.edu.au for further information. If *Ascochyta* blight, botrytis grey mould or sclerotinia white mould is detected in lentil crops, growers and consultants are encouraged to contact CCDM by e-mailing ccdm@curtin.edu.au. The CCDM team can provide a sampling kit to obtain isolates for the annual collection of pulse diseases in WA.

Further information

For more information, refer to Agriculture Victoria's *Ascochyta* blight of lentil page.

Botrytis grey mould

- Grass Patch



Botrytis grey mould on lentil plants. Photo courtesy of Quenten Knight (Agronomy Focus).

Quenten Knight (Agronomy Focus) recently found botrytis grey mould (BGM) in a ALB Burdett lentil crop near Grass Patch. The infection level was quite low throughout the crop although there were some hot spots where the crop is not expected to recover.



Botrytis grey mould on Thunder lentil plants.

Senior Research Scientist Andrea Hills (DPIRD) has also recently reported finding BGM in a Thunder lentil crop near Grass Patch.

BGM is caused by *Botrytis cinerea* infection and is favoured by warm humid spring conditions or dense crop canopies. It can occur in all areas where lentils are grown but is most common in districts with rainfall greater than 400mm.

Symptoms

Botrytis grey mould can infect all above-ground parts of lentil plants, particularly after canopy closure when humid conditions develop. Early symptoms are cream-coloured leaf lesions that enlarge and cause leaf drop. Mature lesions have a characteristic furry layer of grey mould.

Under warm, wet conditions, infection can spread to stems, producing grey mould that girdles stems, causing plant death and patches of dead plants within crops. Infected pods may rot and produce discoloured, shrivelled seed. Infected seed can also cause seedling damping-off and root infection.

Management

Management of botrytis grey mould (BGM) includes widening crop rotations, avoiding lentil crops adjacent to infected stubbles, using disease-free seed, and reducing sowing rates to improve canopy airflow. Disease control is strongly influenced by seasonal conditions and varietal resistance.

Where fungicides are required, applications are most effective before canopy closure, as dense crop canopies can limit spray penetration. Always follow label and permit directions,

particularly for lentils, where market requirements for chemical residues are stringent. For fungicide recommendations, refer to DPIRD's [Fungicides](#) page

Further information

For more BGM information, refer to Agriculture Victoria's [Botrytis grey mould of lentil](#) page.

For more information on lentil diseases, contact Principal Research Scientist [Jean Galloway](#) in Northam on +61 (0)8 9690 2172 or Senior Research Scientist [Andrea Hills](#) in Esperance on +61 (0)8 9083 1144 or Principal Research Scientist [Geoff Thomas](#) in Perth on +61 (0)428 947 287.

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PestFacts WA webinar invitation



Date: Wednesday 23 September 2026

Time: 12:00 - 1:00 pm (AWST)

DPIRD Senior Research Scientists Meredith Guthrie, Svetlana Micic and Andrea Hills will present on:

- The latest climate outlook for WA
- Spring and summer invertebrates growers need to watch out for
- Spring diseases and preparing for next season.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

[Register here.](#)

For more information, contact Research Scientist [Cindy Webster](#) in Narrogin on +61 8 9881 0201.

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