



PestFacts WA

Issue: 18

Date: October 2025

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Native budworm moth numbers surge in northern and central grainbelt

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Reports from volunteer trappers have indicated that native budworm (*Helicoverpa punctigera*) caterpillars are over threshold at Kellerberrin, Koorda and Merredin.

The economic thresholds for native budworm caterpillars at pod ripening (based on \$10/ha control cost) are:

- Fields peas: 1 caterpillar per 10 sweeps (at \$300 per tonne grain price)
- Chickpeas: 1 caterpillar per 10 sweeps (at \$420 per tonne)
- Faba beans: 1 caterpillar per 10 sweeps (at \$280 per tonne)

- Lentils: 1 caterpillar per 10 sweeps (at \$520 per tonne)
- Canola: 2 - 3 caterpillars per 10 sweeps (at \$700 per tonne)
- Lupins: 4 caterpillars per 10 sweeps (at \$350 per tonne).

For more information on calculating the economic threshold for spraying native budworm, refer to DPIRD's [Native budworm spraying threshold](#) factsheet.

DPIRD's MyPestGuide [CropScout app](#) can also be used by growers and consultants to enter their sweep net results to calculate native budworm spray thresholds quickly in the field.



Native budworm caterpillars sweep netted from a lupin crop at Moorine Rock. Photo courtesy of Norton Staer (Elders).

Very high native budworm numbers (more than 100 caterpillars per 10 sweeps) were also found at Moorine Rock in lupins and close to 100 budworm caterpillars were also found in a canola crop nearby.

Back Paddock app users have also reported native budworm caterpillars feeding on canola (var. Emu) and lupins (var. Jurien) near Mullewa.

A farmer has also reported finding 5 budworm caterpillars per 10 sweeps in a lupin crop near Bolgart. The crop was at the pod ripening stage.

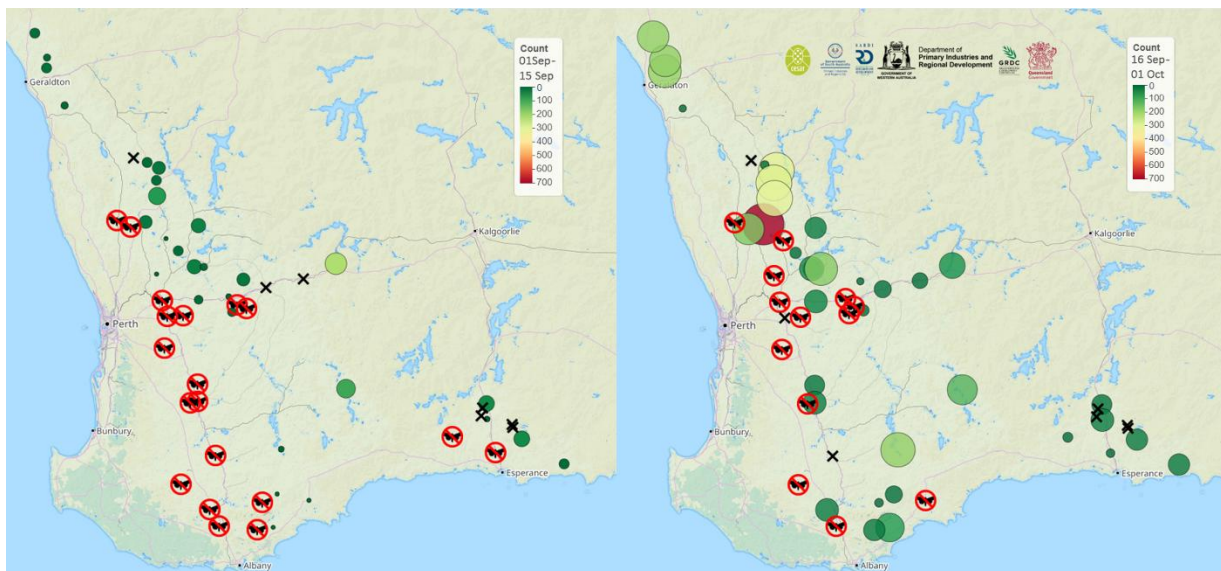


A native budworm caterpillar on a canola pod. Photo courtesy of DPIRD.

Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) staff have sweep netted native budworm caterpillars at canola surveillance sites this week. At Ogilvie 6 caterpillars per 10 sweeps were recorded. At Cascade 4 caterpillars per 10 sweeps were found. At Nabawa 2 caterpillars per 10 sweeps were recorded. At Howick 1 caterpillar per 10 sweeps were recorded.

When sweep netting canola, it is important that growers correctly identify caterpillars as native budworm or diamondback moth (DBM), as the threshold for native budworm is much lower than that for DBM. Growers can use the [PestFacts WA Reporter app](#) to have caterpillars identified.

Moth trapping update



MothTrapVis maps showing native budworm moth trapping results from 01 September to 15 September (left) and 16 September to 01 Oct 2025 (right). X indicates no data, and the red and black moth symbol indicates no moths in trap. Maps courtesy of Cesar Australia.

Native budworm moth numbers caught in traps this week have increased in the Geraldton, Kwinana West and Kwinana East port zones. The MothTrapVis maps above compare

moth captures in the first two weeks of September with those in the last two weeks and show this increased activity.

Traps in canola and pulse crops near Geraldton have been catching approximately 100 moths, while traps further south at Buntine, Wubin, Dalwalinu, Walebing, and Wyalkatchem have been catching between 171 and 281 moths. At Bindi Bindi a trap caught approximately 700 moths.

A mapped view of all recent native budworm trap captures is available at Cesar Australia's [MothTrapVisWA](#) page. Viewers need to consider and then select the date range for the trapping results.

As lupin and canola crops begin to hay-off this month, the pod walls will soften, allowing easier access for caterpillars. The latest flight of moths would have laid eggs and, with the warmer spring weather being experienced, these eggs will hatch, with caterpillars expected to reach approximately 5mm in length in 1 to 2 weeks. Caterpillars of this size can put significant pressure on crop production when lupin and canola are at their most vulnerable. For more information about crop susceptibility to native budworm, refer to the 2025 PestFacts WA Issue 17 article [Native budworm caterpillars exceeding thresholds in some locations](#) and Issue 14 article [Check your crops for native budworm caterpillars](#).

Management

Pesticide options for the control of native budworm can be found in [DPIRD's 2025 Winter Spring Insecticide Guide](#).

Growers who are contemplating spraying maturing canola, lupins and field peas in the coming weeks should be mindful of chemical withholding periods and check chemical labels before spraying.

Further information

Detailed information on this pest can be found at the department's [Native budworm](#) page.

To read about prior native budworm activity this season refer to the 2025 PestFacts WA articles in:

- Issue 17 [Native budworm caterpillars exceeding thresholds in some locations](#)
- Issue 16 [Native budworm caterpillars are attacking wheat crops](#)
- Issue 15 [Native budworm caterpillar update](#)
- Issue 14 [Check your crops for native budworm caterpillars](#)
- Issue 12 [Native budworm migration update](#)
- Issue 10 [Why are we seeing native budworm larvae so early?](#)
- Issue 9 [Native budworm moth update](#)
- Issue 8 [Native budworm moth flights have started](#)
- Issue 7 [Native budworm moth trapping program will begin in July. Would you like to host a trap?](#)

For further information on native budworm contact Research Scientists [Christiaan Valentine](#) in Northam on +61 8 9690 2197 or Research Scientist [Andrew Phillips](#) in Geraldton on +61 8 9956 8567.

Article authors: Christiaan Valentine (DPIRD Northam) and Cindy Webster (DPIRD Narrogin).

PestFacts WA webinar invitation



You are invited to register and attend our upcoming PestFacts WA webinar.

Date: Thursday 16 October 2025

Time: 12:30 - 1:30 pm (AWST)

DPIRD Research Scientists Ian Foster, Svetlana Micic and Geoff Thomas will present on:

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

Registering attendance

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email with details on how to join the webinar. To register for the webinar, [click here](#).

More information

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

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