



PestFacts WA

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Contents

- [South coast growers urged to monitor native budworm native budworm caterpillars after spike in moth flight detections](#)
- [Protecting grain: ensure clean augers, field bins and silos against insects](#)
- [Avoid snail contamination at harvest](#)

South coast growers urged to monitor native budworm caterpillars after spike in moth flight detections

Caterpillar activity

- Ogilvie
- Nabawa
- Durawah
- Mullewa
- Maya
- Buntine
- Wubin
- Bindi Bindi
- Dowerin
- Southern Cross
- Salmon gums
- Myrup

Following recent spikes in native budworm moth (*Helicoverpa punctigera*) numbers across the Albany region, growers are encouraged to sweep canola and pulse crops. A significant moth migration event has likely led to increased egg-laying in crops.

In the past week, the PestFacts WA team has received many reports of native budworm caterpillars in the northern, central and Esperance regions, with numbers approaching or

exceeding economic thresholds. This follows significant increases in moths detected in pheromone traps during late September and early October in those regions.

A consultant has reported 3 to 5 native budworm caterpillars per 10 sweeps in canola at the pod ripening stage near Myrup. A single large caterpillar was found on a lentil crop at the late podding stage near Salmon Gums (see the photo below).



A native budworm caterpillar that was found feeding on a maturing lentil crop near Salmon Gums. Photos courtesy of DPIRD.

A volunteer trapper in the native budworm surveillance program reported finding 8 to 15 caterpillars per 10 sweeps (the majority less than 10 mm in size) after sweeping a lupin crop with green pods at Bindi Bindi. No visible pod damage was observed. Two weeks earlier, 700 moths had been caught in the moth trap at the same location.

Above threshold caterpillars have also been reported by volunteer trappers in a lupin crop at Dowerin and in a lentil crop at Southern Cross.

Caterpillar numbers approaching economic threshold levels have been reported in canola at Wubin, and in lupins at Buntine and Durawah. The grower at Durawah found 5 to 10 small caterpillars per 10 sweeps in greener areas of the crop, with no leaf drop, and an average of 0.6 larvae per 10 sweeps in other parts of the paddock. This highlights the importance of sweeping at multiple locations within the paddock to assess budworm numbers.

Back Paddock app users have also reported native budworm caterpillars feeding on canola (var. Nuseed Raptor TF) and wheat (var. Scepter) near Geraldton, and on lupins (var. Jurien) near Mullewa.

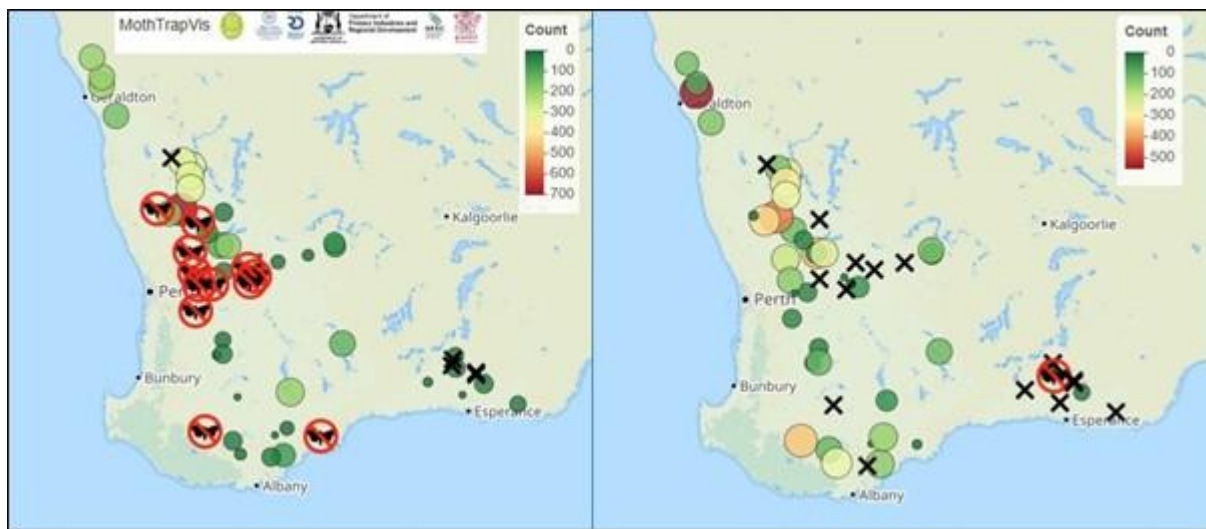
Below threshold caterpillar numbers have been found in the northern DPIRD canola surveillance sites at Ogilvie, Nabawa and Maya.

To find out more about the economic thresholds for native budworm caterpillars at pod ripening, refer to the 2025 PestFacts WA Issue 18 article [Native budworm moth numbers surge in northern and central grainbelt](#).

Moth trapping update

- Usual trapping locations

During October there has been a notable increase in trapped moths in the Albany and Kwinana East port zones.



MothTrapVis maps showing native budworm moth trapping results from 16 Sept to 1 Oct 2025 (left) and 2 to 15 Oct 2025 (right). X indicates no data, and the red and black moth symbol indicates no moths in trap. Maps courtesy of Cesar Australia.

In the past week, the higher moth counts were recorded at: Dowerin (lupins 242 moths), Durawah (lupins 211), Kojonup SW (canola 162), Wubin (lupins 151), Bindi Bindi (canola 132), Buntine (lupins 72), Southern Cross (chickpeas 62, lentils 37), Nalyerup (lupins 54), Narrogin (lupins 48), Dalwallinu (field peas 16) and Moora (canola 3).

At DPIRD canola monitoring sites, the following moth counts were recorded over the past fortnight: Kendenup (248 moths), Bolgart (206), Northam (138), Kojaneerup (137), Allanooka (126), Maya (124), Wongan Hills (113), Ogilvie (112), Cranbrook (100), Nabawa East (84), Dale (34), Narraloggan (33) and Amelup (2).

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

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 18 [Native budworm moth numbers surge in northern and central grainbelt](#)
- 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 Andrew Phillips in Geraldton on +61 8 9956 8567.

Article author: Bec Severtson (DPIRD Northam).

Protecting grain: ensure clean augers, field bins and silos



On farm grain silos. Photo courtesy of Ben White (GRDC).

The Western Australian grains industry is focused on gas-tight, sealable storage and fumigation to achieve the federally mandated 'nil tolerance' for live insects in exports.

Residual pest populations surviving in empty storages during winter will infest new season grain when it is put into the storages. If eradication of these pests is not undertaken, they may undergo selection for resistance as a result of repeated fumigations.

Gas-tight, sealable silos are the preferred system of storage, and pressure testing silos should be part of the annual maintenance. It is much easier to replace seals and carry out repairs when silos are empty. It is recommended that inspection of inlet and outlet seals occurs and replaced, if necessary. In addition, pressure relief oil valves should be checked and topped up with light hydraulic oil if needed.

It is good practice to pressure test sealed silos upon erection, annually, and before fumigating with a five-minute half-life pressure test. See the GRDC-supported [stored grain information hub](#) website for more details on [pressure testing](#).

Augers, field bins and silos should be thoroughly cleaned of grain residues and treated with a structural treatment, such as diatomaceous earth. The ground around storages should be cleared of weeds and rubbish to prevent harbouring insects. Old grain residues should be burned or buried deep.

Growers are reminded that due to label variations, fenitrothion will be phased out as a structural treatment in grain storage facilities. After 19 August 2026, its use - including hand spraying - will no longer be permitted. All agricultural chemicals, including fenitrothion products, should be used in accordance with the registered product label directions.

Diatomaceous earth is preferred for in-silo structural treatments. Non-chemical products such as diatomaceous earth need at least two weeks before loading grain to be effective. Diatomaceous earth is a naturally occurring insecticide and will provide good control for at

least 12 months. Diatomaceous earth is non-toxic, but a dust mask and eye protection should be worn as per the label's personal protective equipment requirements.

Nitrogen can be used on its own or in combination with other fumigants for effective insect control. However, it requires a very high level of sealing on the silo, and the silo must be initially purged along with very high levels of silo sealing to maintain an environment free of oxygen.

Phosphine is the cheapest form of insect control at around 30 c/tonne. However, growers need to ensure that their silo is a gas-tight sealable silo and meets Australian Standards AS2628-2010.

Phosphine inhalation is very serious and can be fatal. Always read the label and safety data sheets, wear protective clothing including chemically resistant gloves and a full-face respirator with an appropriate phosphine cartridge. Inform others – such as putting up a phosphine warning sign - when a storage facility is under fumigation.

To kill grain pests at all stages of their life cycle (egg, larvae, pupae, adult), growers should refer to the phosphine label instructions regarding dosage, treatment, ventilation and withholding times.

Poor fumigation can result in only adult and larval insects being killed, giving the mistaken impression that the fumigation was successful. However, the immature eggs and pupae will not be killed, leading to reinfestation and the development of resistant populations.

Fumigating in an unsealed silo or field bin is an off-label use. It is not only ineffective - at best killing adults and larvae - but it will also lead to strong resistance developing on your farm.

Managing phosphine resistance

Insect populations with weak phosphine resistance have developed in all grain-growing states of Australia, largely as a result of poor fumigations. Strong resistance is widespread in the eastern states and has started to take hold in the west, so to help minimise the development of strong resistance to phosphine in WA, use well maintained gas-tight sealable silos.

Detecting phosphine resistant grain pests early will make eradication possible and will protect your income. To arrange a free resistance test for grain pests, contact the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) phosphine management team at phosphinemanagement@dpiird.wa.gov.au

Growers keeping grain on farm for their own use using silos that are not sealed can use aeration as an alternative method to keep insects in low numbers.

Aeration cooling is an effective tool which can be used in combination after fumigation for maintaining insect population control. While aeration cooling will not kill insects, it will dramatically reduce reproduction provided aeration fans are used in combination with an aeration controller to selectively push cool dry air through the grain in the silo at a rate of 2-3 litres per second per tonne.

Further information

For more information on stored grain management, and insecticide resistance, visit;

- DPIRD's [Stored grain insect resistance monitoring and management](#) page
- GRDC's supported website [stored grain information hub](#)

- GRDC's grain storage – Storage updates webinar video
- GRDC's hygiene and structural treatments for grain storage factsheet.

For more information, contact DPIRD Senior Biosecurity Officer Mike Jones in Geraldton on +61 427 997 146 or Ben White from GRDC grain storage extension team WA on 1800 WEEVIL (1800 933 845).

Authors: The original article was written by Dr Oonagh Byrne (DPIRD South Perth), Dave Cousins (DPIRD South Perth) and Ben White (GRDC) and has since undergone revisions.

Avoid snail contamination at harvest

- Mount Barker
- Myrup



White Italian snails on canola pods. Photo courtesy of Quenten Knight (Agronomy Focus).

Quenten Knight (Agronomy Focus) has reported finding White Italian snails in the upper canopy of canola near Myrup. Similarly, Technical officer Stuart Bee (DPIRD) has observed small pointed snails in the canopy of a canola crop at Mount Barker. In both cases, some feeding damage was noted, but the main concern was the potential for harvest contamination.

Growers and consultants are urged to keep an eye out for snails climbing up into crop canopies, as this can pose a contamination risk during harvest. Entomologist Svetlana Micic (DPIRD) says that, as a rule of thumb, if snails are easily seen on crop stems or found in sweep nets when monitoring for caterpillar pests, grain contamination at harvest is possible.

Snail movement into the crop canopy at harvest depends on the weather conditions. Snails are more active at night and following rain events. Trials have shown that grain harvested during the day had less snail contamination than grain harvested at night.

Past footage from snail monitoring cameras has revealed that as weather conditions become hotter, round snails are more likely to move up crop stems, whereas small pointed snails tend to move under stubble on the ground.

If you have snails, now is the time to plan for harvest. Options include using a stripper front or increasing crop cutting height (for example, in cereals) to reduce snail intake. There are also post-harvest options for removing snails from grain - now is the time to budget for these measures.

Good farm biosecurity practices can help prevent snails from spreading between paddocks and properties.

At this stage of the season (spring), it is too late to use snail-killing bait.

Plan for next season's snail management now

Growers are encouraged to be proactive now and start planning their snail management strategy for next year. This is the ideal time to inspect paddocks intended for canola in 2026 to assess snail numbers. Snails can survive hot, dry summers, and can thrive in all soil types.

Before seeding in 2026, check paddocks again for snails and budget for multiple bait applications. Keep in mind that fertiliser spreaders may not distribute baits evenly or as far as expected, so calibration and application checks are important.

Further information

To read about earlier snail activity reported to the PestFacts WA team this season, refer to the 2025 PestFacts WA Issue 2 article [Now is the time to patch bait snails](#).

For more information on snails and their management during the season and at harvest visit;

- DPIRD's [Pests slugs and snails and their management in broadacre crops](#) factsheet
- DPIRD's [Managing snails in broadacre crops](#) podcast
- GRDC's [Nail the Snails](#) publication
- GRDC's [Paddock Practices: Tips and tools for reducing snails at harvest](#) factsheet
- GRDC's [Snail baiting as part of an integrated pest management strategy](#) video
- Stirlings to Coast Farmers [The cost of removing snails from canola](#) factsheet
- Stirlings to Coast Farmers [Removing small conical snails from canola](#) factsheet
- Stirlings to Coast Farmers [Removing small conical snails from barley](#) factsheet.

For more information on snails contact Senior Research Scientist [Svetlana Micic](#) in Albany on +61 8 9892 8591.

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