

## Cotton Square Borer

The larvae of **cotton square borer** (*Strymon melinus*) are pale green (sometimes brownish), fuzzy caterpillars that may reach about ½-inch length when full grown. Adults are an attractive butterflies, with an overall blue-gray coloration, and small thread-like “tails” extending from the hindwing. The adult is also known as the **gray hairstreak**.

Winter is passed in the pupal stage, and adults may be first seen in late spring. Females lay single eggs (not in a mass) on leaves and eggs typically hatch in 4-6 days. Young larvae feed on the leaf surface; later stage larvae may tunnel into stems, leaf midribs and, perhaps, buds. When full-grown, about 3-4 weeks after egg hatch, the larvae then pupate, attaching themselves to the plant with a small bit of silk. A week or two later adults emerge to repeat the cycle and there are probably two, perhaps three, generations completed annually in Colorado.

Damage to hemp by this insect is likely to be minimal and insignificant. This insect is never abundant and largely feeds on foliage. Some bud tunneling may occur, although it has not yet been documented.

Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae



**Full-grown larva of the cotton square borer.**



**Mating pair of gray hairstreak butterflies, the adult stage of the cotton square borer.**