

Lygus Bugs

Lygus bug is the name given to a group of plant bugs in the genus *Lygus* that are very commonly found in crops, gardens and natural areas throughout the state. Several species occur in Colorado; to date the most common species found in hemp in eastern Colorado is the **pale legume bug** (*Lygus elisus*). Two other species found in most any crop grown in the region are the **western plant bug** (*Lygus hesperus*) and the **tarnished plant bug** (*Lygus lineolaris*).

There are hundreds of plant species on which Lygus bugs will develop. Legumes (e.g., alfalfa, peas, vetch) and mustards (e.g., flixweed, canola) are perhaps the most important plant families that support Lygus bugs in Colorado, but they are also associated with a great many other kinds of herbaceous broadleaved plants. Migrations into hemp may accelerate as nearby sources of these these plants mature and dry down or are cut/harvested.

Lygus bugs feed by sucking fluids from plants. During the course of this feeding they will



Adult of the (top) pale legume bug and (bottom) western tarnished plant bug.



Nymph of the tarnished plant bug. Photograph courtesy of Scott Bauer, USDA-ARS.

destroy cells at the feeding site, a kind of injury (“lacerate and flush”) that is much more destructive that occurs from feeding by other sucking insects such as aphids and leafhoppers that feed by tapping into the fluids of the phloem. Furthermore, feeding is concentrated on younger tissues, such as emerging leaves, flowers, and developing seeds. Effects from Lygus bug feeding include distortion of new growth, flower abortion, and deformities of seeds.

Damage to hemp by Lygus bugs is likely to be minimal. However, they have been important in many kinds of crops where seed production is

important, as they can reduce seed production and quality. This may be a potential issue in hemp being grown as an oilseed crop.

Hemiptera: Miridae