

European Corn Borer

European corn borer (*Ostrinia nubilalis*) is an insect that commonly occurs through the Corn Belt and in the eastern U.S.; presently it is not present west of the Rocky Mountains. In Colorado it is particularly abundant in the northeastern counties.

The developing stages (larvae/caterpillars) of the European corn borer develop as a stem/stalk borer. In addition to corn a great many plants are hosts of this insect, including pepper, snap bean, chrysanthemum, dahlia, and several other ornamentals. Stems of seedling trees are also sometimes damaged by larvae.

During the peak period of US hemp production, within the Midwestern states in the 1940s, European corn borer was the insect mentioned as being most often observed to damage the crop.



European corn borer larva in corn stalk. Photograph courtesy of David Keith, University of Nebraska.



European corn borer larvae hatching from egg mass. Photograph courtesy of Jim Kalisch, University of Nebraska.

The stage of the European corn borer that occurs within plant stems is a creamy to grayish larva, with some indistinct rows of small, round, brown spots running the length of its body. A full-grown larva is about one inch long.

European corn borer spends winter in the stage of a full-grown larva within plant debris it fed upon during late summer/early fall. Pupation occurs in spring, and the adults emerge in late spring. Adults typically aggregate and mate in dense grassy “action sites”, then females lay eggs in the form of masses on foliage.

Early-stage larvae often tunnel into leaf veins, later moving into stalks or fruit as they get older. Pupation occurs in the plant, and there is usually a second generation in August.

Based on historical accounts, European corn borer has potential to be a significant insect pest of this crop. Stem and stalk tunneling may reduce yield and can also cause structural

weakening that can cause stem/stalk breakage.

Lepidoptera: Crambidae



Adult European corn borer, female.
Photograph courtesy of David Shetlar, The Ohio State University.



Pupa of a European corn borer in corn stalk.
Photograph courtesy of Jim Kalisch, University of Nebraska.