

# Insects



## Sod Webworms on Turfgrass

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Sod webworms are a large destructive group of turfgrass pests that usually are found infesting the sunny areas of lawns or golf courses. Adult moths of most species are ½ inch long with a prominent forward projection on the head (labial palpi) from which they get the name snout moths. The forewings are dull ash gray with a conspicuous whitish or silver colored streak or with less noticeable streaks from the base to the margin. Hind wings are whitish grey or light brown. The moths fly erratically over the lawn laying eggs between 7:30 and 10:30 in the evening. During the day, they rest in the grass or on plant foliage with their wings folded back over the body giving the moths a slender, tapering silhouette.



*Sod webworm moth  
photo courtesy of David J. Shetlar, OSU*

The tiny oblong eggs are white to pale yellow in color and hatch in seven to 10 days. Larvae range in color from pinkish white, yellowish to light brown. When fully grown, they are about 1 inch long with coarse hairs and most species have paired dark spots on their tops and sides.

Sod webworms overwinter as larvae in silk-lined tubes below the soil surface. In the early spring, they feed on the upper roots, stems and leaves of grass. On steep slopes and in sunny areas, larvae build protective silken webs where they feed and develop. In April and May, they pupate in underground cocoons with the first adults emerging in early May.

Larvae cut off grass blades near the thatch line and pull them underground for consumption. Small brown patches of closely cut grass appear, and if populations are large, patches run together to form large irregular brown patches. Most of the severe damage occurs in July and August when grasses are growing slowly. Two to three generations may be expected each year, with six weeks per generation. Adult moths fly up in front of a lawnmower, fly a zigzag course for a short distance and land in the grass.

Sod webworm larval populations may be detected by applying 2 teaspoons of liquid dishwashing detergent in 1 gallon of water over 4 square feet of



*Sod webworm moth*  
photo courtesy of David J. Shetlar, OSU

grass concentrated within a wooden or metal frame. After a few minutes, the webworms begin to surface and a careful 10-minute inspection between grass blades will reveal them if present. Control measures should be taken if four to six or more larval sod webworms are found in 4 square feet of sod.

This economic threshold is based on good growing conditions for turf. If the turf is under stress from insufficient water, poor fertility, extremes in temperature, or bird feeding damage, treatment may be required at lower sod webworm densities to maintain turf quality.

**For chemical control recommendations on residential lawns by the general public refer to:**  
<https://tiny.utk.edu/ag/lawninsect>.

**For chemical control recommendations for commercial turfgrass insect control refer to:**  
<https://tiny.utk.edu/ag/turfingsect>.

Always refer to the insecticide label to make sure that the insecticide can be legally applied on turfgrass at your site, such as residential lawn treatments by the general public, commercial residential turfgrass, athletic fields, sod farms, and golf courses.

### Disclaimer

This publication contains pesticide recommendations that are subject to change at any time. The recommendations in this publication are provided only as a guide. It is always the pesticide applicator's responsibility, by law, to read and follow all current label directions for the specific pesticide being used. The label always takes precedence over the recommendations found in this publication.

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