

Fall armyworm larval identification guide

Early instar caterpillars (stages 1-3)

Early instar larvae are very similar to young caterpillars of other species; DNA confirmation/rearing may be required for conclusive identification. Things to look for, however, are:

- 1) Overall yellowish/greening colour
- 2) Length approximately 1.5mm–6.5mm (covering stages L1-L3)
- 3) Rows of black dots
- 4) Developing white lines running down the body
- 5) Developing pinkish blotches running down side of body (red arrow)



Late instar caterpillars (stages 4-6)

Late instar larvae possess the distinctive fall armyworm characters. These include:

- 1) Length approximately 10mm–35mm (covering stages L4-L6)
 - 2) Head with 'mottled' patterning (yellow arrow)
 - 3) Thoracic shield similar colour to the head (green arrow)
 - 4) Body bearing an overall 'granulated' pattern; note colour can vary
 - 5) Roughly defined alternating pale/darker lines running down body
 - 6) Black dots (but different from black blotches of other species, such as *S. litura* or *S. mauritia*)
 - 7) Presence of sclerotized rings around setae at the front and back of the caterpillar (yellow circles; with zoomed-in inset for posterior ring)
 - 8) Black dots on the posterior upper-side of body in a square (abdominal segment 8; green circle) and trapezoid (abdominal segment 9; blue circle) arrangement
 - 9) arrangement (blue circle)
- Overall appearance, note that colour may vary from pinkish to yellowish, to brownish, to quite dark** ■■■

