



## agriculture, land reform & rural development

Department:  
Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### **African Armyworm outbreaks**

The department has received reports on African armyworm outbreaks from different provinces. The reports were received from Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, and KwaZulu-Natal. The African armyworm mostly affects grassland and some savannah areas.

The African armyworm is the larva of a night-flying moth which, in large numbers, causes considerable damage to grass and agricultural cereal crops (pastures, wheat, maize, rice, millet, sorghum and sugarcane). Outbreaks follow the onset of wet seasons when dry grasslands produce new growth and cereal crops are planted.

### **Symptoms**

Caterpillars feed on the leaves of cereals and grasses, leaving holes. The adult caterpillars drop to the ground if disturbed.

### **Description of pest**

The caterpillar develops from grey-green with white-yellow stripes down its back when small, to black with thin blue lines down the middle of the back and yellow-green lines outside the blue lines when fully grown. The caterpillar measures 2 to 3cm long.

### **Warning to cattle farmers**

One aspect of armyworm outbreaks is the poisoning which sometimes follows an infestation. This has been recorded on Kikuyu grass and only affects cattle under field conditions. Symptoms in cattle usually appear about 10 days after the appearance of the worms, and only some kikuyu pastures produce this toxicity.

**Symptoms in cattle:** The swallowing of affected cattle is paralysed, appearance of large 'strings' of watery saliva drooling from the mouth, and animals exhibit an apparent severe thirst. Slight symptoms of bloat, grinding of teeth, and nervous twitching may occur.

As soon as symptoms are observed, all animals should be removed from the affected pastures and a Vet called in. A good prevention of further poisoning is the removal of all animals from the pasture for a period of at least 40 days.

**If you have experienced or observed any outbreak of this pest**, please contact DALRRD (Migratory Pest) to the following officials:

Ms Vuyokazi Jongwana: Cellphone number: 0607184357,  
Mr Khuliso Gangashe: Cellphone number: 0674106103  
stating clearly:

- The locality of infestation (district, farm name); Size of infestation (number of hectares); Crop infested; Your name and a contact number.