

*Ostrinia nubilalis* (Hubner)

# European Corn Borer

**NOT KNOWN TO  
OCCUR IN IDAHO**



Photo by Lynette Elliott, bugguide.net

## HOSTS

Although the preferred host plant is corn, ECB also attacks other vegetables such as beans, peppers, lettuce, tomatoes, and potatoes. Many weeds are also attacked, allowing early-emerging larvae to survive and produce a larger second generation.

## LIFE HISTORY

**Eggs:** Female corn borer moths lay clusters of eggs on leaves, usually on the undersides. The eggs are laid in an overlapping, scale-like configuration and are pale yellow. As larvae within the eggs develop the black heads of the immature caterpillars become visible through the transparent shells. The caterpillars hatch by chewing their way out of the eggs, then immediately burrow through leaves into the plant stalk where larval feeding begins.

**Larva:** The fully grown larva is 0.75 to 1 inch (1.9-2.5 cm) in length. It is usually beige, but may range from light gray to faint pink, with conspicuous small, round, brown spots on each segment.

**Adult:** The European corn borer moth is about 1 inch (2.5 cm) long with a .75 to 1.25 inch (1.9-3.2 cm) wingspan. The female is light yellowish brown with dark, irregular, wavy bands across the wings. The male is slightly smaller and darker. The tip of its abdomen protrudes beyond its closed wings.

## DAMAGE

ECB attacks all parts of the corn stalk and can move into the ear. When first chewing through corn leaves they cause shot-hole-like damage before entering the midrib stalk or tassel, and often characteristic stalk breakage occurs. Larvae can also infest green, wax, lima, and soy beans, green peppers, potatoes, tomatoes, apples, small grains, millet, buckwheat, sorghum, dahlias, smartweed, pigweed, and most other commercial crops and weeds. Damage results from defoliation and boring, which reduces the translocation of nutrients and water giving rise to decreased yields. Second generation ECB may enter the ear from the base, side, or tip and greatly affect fresh market sweet corn quality or salability.



Photo by J. Obermeyer, Purdue University



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Photo by Mariusz Sobieski, bugwood.org