



DESERT LOCUST FACT SHEET

January 2020

IMPORTANT POINTS TO CONSIDER

- 1) Adult gregarious females lay around 80 eggs in an egg pod in the soil. Females can lay at least three times in their lifetime usually at intervals of about 6-11 days – ***this means we are very likely to see further outbreaks over the coming weeks so we must remain vigilant.*** Areas to focus intense monitoring are:

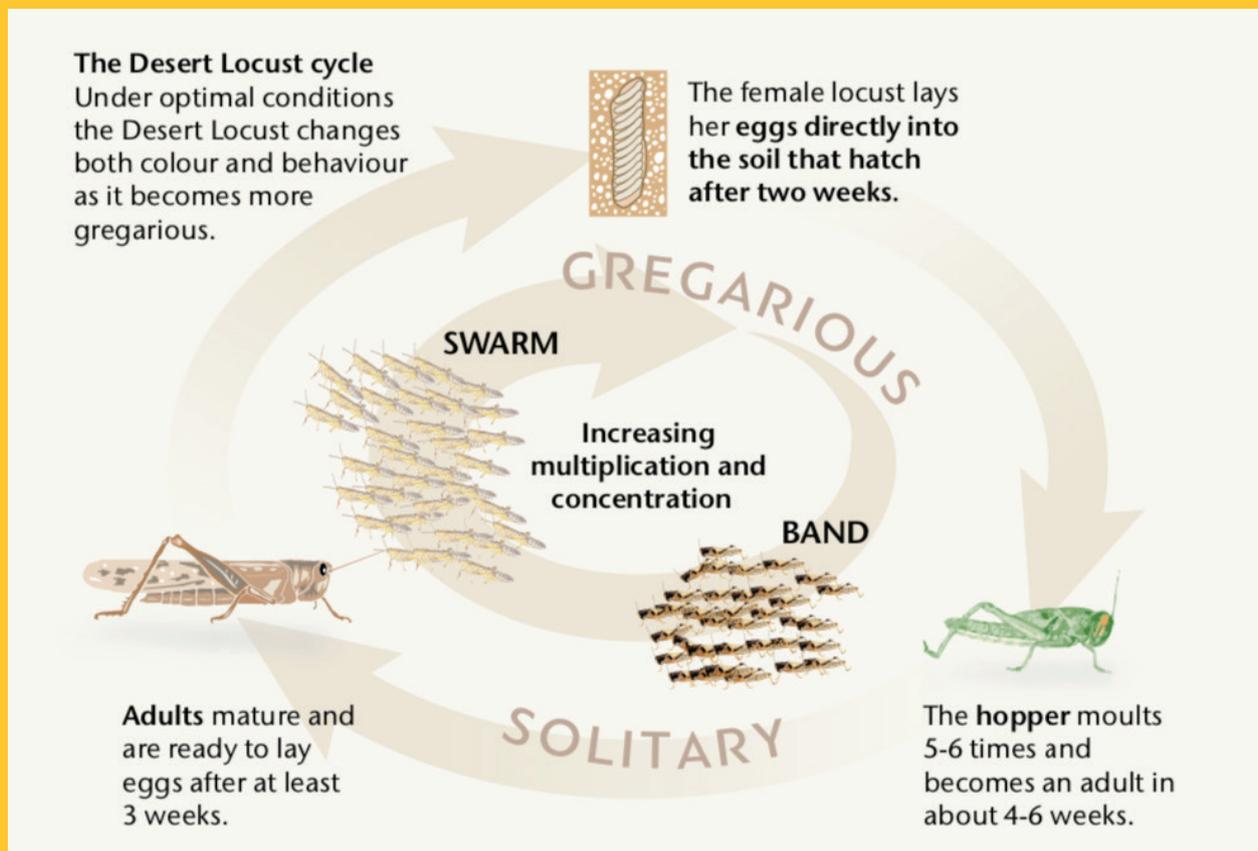
- Between Losessia and Kipsing
- Between Kula Mawe and Kachuru
- The Lorian swamp area
- Along the path that any other swarm takes

A map has been developed which shows the paths which the recent outbreaks have taken - see page 3.

- 2) A very useful Q and A forum from FAO can be seen here – all of the common questions are answered: <http://www.fao.org/ag/locusts/oldsite/LOCFAQ.htm>

LIFE CYCLE:

- A desert locust lives about three to five months
- The life cycle comprises three stages: egg, hopper (nymph) and adult
- Eggs hatch in about two weeks
- Hoppers shed their skins five or six times, each time growing in size. This process is called moulting and the stage between moults is referred to as an “instar”
- Hoppers develop over a period of about 30-40 days
- Adults mature in about three weeks to nine months but more frequently from two to four months, depending on environmental conditions, mainly temperature
- An adult locust can eat its own body weight every day, about 2.5g. Adults that can fly are initially sexually immature, but eventually become sexually mature and can copulate and lay eggs
- Solitary individuals always remain somewhere in the environment, ready to mate when conditions are favourable



IMPACT:

Locust outbreaks are a natural phenomenon – they respond to abundant rainfall and resulting vegetation and therefore they play an important part in the ecosystem which we must not forget. Their impact is realised when they significantly affect livestock fodder banks or crops.

- A 1 km² size swarm contains about 40 million locusts, which eat the same amount of food in one day as about 35,000 people, 20 camels or 6 elephants
- The biggest risk is if the swarm enters agricultural land where crops will be decimated
- The current impact is on possible grazing / fodder for livestock and wildlife. Thankfully the recent abundant rains have provided plenty of fodder so at this stage the impact of the locusts is minimal and to date has been contained. The big fear is a “plague” – this is a vast number of locusts with unstoppable consequences
- An adult swarm can travel between 50 and over 100kms per day
- Swarms gather at night and roost together within trees and bushes. They fly again in the morning when the sun warms them
- Their movement is guided by wind patterns and vegetation availability – in our case we can therefore expect them to move South West
- The hopper stages move less – they cannot fly and therefore are limited to around 200 metres of movement per day

WAYS TO CONTROL LOCUSTS:

Locusts are “controlled” to minimise detrimental effects on livestock fodder banks and human cropland.

- Chemical sprays are commonly used – if the product is selected carefully then the impact on other insects / birds and mammals can be minimalised. In this recent outbreak the Government of Kenya have been leading the selection process and authorisation in partnership with NEMA
- Using the locusts as a feed source for people and / or livestock or fish feed. Locusts are a high protein source – they can be captured, dried and eaten safely

