

David G. Hallauer
District Extension Agent
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Forage Stand Recovery

Larval feeding in forage stands from fall armyworm has been rampant as this growing season heads towards the finish. Perennial forage crops like brome and alfalfa tend to respond fairly well to feeding in most cases, but scouting is still strongly recommended.

From a feeding standpoint, we don't always know with certainty what the culprit might be. Fall armyworms don't typically overwinter in Kansas, so the hope is they will wrap up feeding after this generation and try to find more suitable feeding location. True armyworms can overwinter in Kansas, so will likely continue to cycle through another generation or two, requiring a hard frost or freeze to end their feeding year.

From a damage recovery standpoint, there are lots of variables that come in to play. Late harvested stands seemed to be the most attractive to initial feeding damage and as they regrow may still be quite attractive to moths looking to lay eggs for the next generation of feeding. Stands that are under drought stress, are nutrient deficient, or have been declining over time may recover even more slowly than stands in better growing conditions. Since root growth tends to stop for at least a couple of weeks after complete defoliation, stands take time to recover – some more than others. Continue scouting to see first if the stand is going to recover and second to make sure another infestation doesn't remove new growth before it has a chance to.

If there were an 'easy' answer as to what to do now and what to expect going forward – believe me, I'd share it here. Unfortunately, there are a lot of variables at play and stands are going to respond differently based on level of infestation and previous management. Continue monitoring this fall to make sure feeding pressure doesn't cause additional damage.

Planting Trees in the Fall

If you've been looking at your landscape all summer wishing you had more shade, or added color, or just another landscape feature in the way of a tree – consider planting now. Warm soil conditions in the fall are generally encouraging for rapid root growth. If we can get some good moisture (or provide it ourselves...), fall can be a great time to get a tree established so it's better established prior to harsher conditions next growing season.

The best time to plant *most* trees in the fall is early September to late October. This should provide ample time for roots to become established before ground freezes. Avoid planting beech, birch, redbud, magnolia, tulip poplar, willow oak, scarlet oak, black oak, willows, and dogwood, in the fall since they don't put out a lot of fall root growth. Wait on them until spring.

Fall trees are not 'easy care'. The top might be dormant, but roots are still actively growing. Make sure soils stay moist but not soggy via watering through the fall and in to the winter if we have warm spells reducing soil moisture levels. Mulch can be helpful because it minimizes moisture loss and slows soil cooling so root growth continues as long as possible.