CORN EARWORM CONTROL

By

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The corn earworm is also known as the cotton bollworm and the tomato fruitworm, depending on what plant it may be attacking. The corn earworm varies in color from light green to pink to brown. The head is yellow and the legs are nearly black. The adults are light grayish-brown moths with a wing expanse of about 1 1/2 inches and are often called 'millers'.

Life History: The moth feeds on nectar and lays its creamy-white, hemispherical, ridged eggs on the silks at night. The eggs hatch in two to ten days and the young worms go into the ears where they feed on the silks and kernels for two to four weeks. Usually only one worm is found in an ear.

Control: There are two methods which can be used. The most satisfactory is the DDT-oil emulsion method. This emulsion is made in the following proportions:

1 gallon of 25 percent emulsifiable DDT 2 1/2 gallons of white oil (65-95 seconds saybolt) 21 1/2 gallons of water

This should be mixed thoroughly before putting it in the sprayer. The first spray treatment should be made when 10 percent of the stalks first show silks. Spray about one-fourth of a teaspoon of the emulsion directly on the silks and also on the 'spikes' which will later develop into ears. This should be repeated again at a two-day interval. Better results will be obtained with a third treatment applied at the same time interval.

This can be applied with an air pressure garden sprayer. For best results, the sprayer should be equipped with a pressure gauge, so as to be able to maintain a pressure ranging between 35 to 60 pounds during the spraying operation. The sprayer should also be equipped with a low pressure nozzle, having an orifice of 0.042 inches.

If the majority of the corn has silked it is too late for effective control with the DDT - oil emulsion method. After this time, a good measure of control can be obtained with one application of 1 percent DDT in mineral oil. This should be applied after most of the silks are bending down, indicating that the silks are already fertilized with pollen. This mixture is made by mixing the following:

1 gallon of 25 percent emulsifiable DDT 24 gallons of oil (65-95 seconds saybolt)

This spray may be applied to individual ear silks with the same type garden sprayer as mentioned above. With this method, however, the nozzle orifice should be 0.028 inches. Do not apply more than one-fourth teaspoon of this DDT - oil solution to an ear, as excessive amounts may injure the ear.

Many growers prefer to apply this DDT - oil solution by means of a synthetic rubber sponge. The sponge is cut so that it is about as long as a man's finger and about three times as thick. This sponge is dipped in the DDT - oil solution and then placed on the top of the corn silk and squeezed until about one-fourth of a teaspoon of the solution runs out of the sponge into the silk.

DO NOT APPLY EXCESSIVE AMOUNTS OF THE DDT-MINERAL OIL AS INJURY MAY RESULT.

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