

**Species:** *Spodoptera mauritia*

**Common name:** Lawn Armyworm, Lawn Moths, Lawn Grub

**Order:** Lepidoptera

**Family:** Noctuidae



Lawn Armyworm is the caterpillar of a moth that many of us are seeing in our gardens now. The armyworm's name describes the way larvae march in large numbers away from sites where their food has run out. They are a major pest during summer and autumn, causing severe damage to turf where they attack leaves, stems and seed heads. Severe damage is predominantly caused by the later instar stages and as populations increase.

The adult Lawn Armyworm moth has a body size of about 20mm and are mainly brown with a complex pattern of creamy and grey markings. The forewings are greyish brown with variable white-dark markings and a distinct white spot in the centre. The wingspan is up to 40mm. Hindwings are pale and shiny. The wings are folded in an inverted 'V' over the abdomen. The female Lawn Armyworm moth may lay more than 1000 eggs, sporadically in clusters within 4 to 10 days, pending on temperature. She lays her eggs into soft cocoons usually on the awnings of houses, under side of leaves and even clothes lines. The newly hatched armyworms stay together feeding on the same plant until it is devoured.

The larvae are a soft bodied caterpillar with a dark coloured body up to 45 mm long, they possess unique white and yellow striped patterns along the length of the back making them relatively easy to identify. When feeding the larvae

often appear in congregations, clumping around stems and foliage of the turf plant. They feed mainly in the evening or night and hiding under the lower grass leaves during the day and can be highly mobile when their food source has run out.

An armyworm will undergo 6 to 9 instar stages, usually taking 21-35 days until maturity. Armyworms pupate in the soil and emerges 10-14 days later as moths. There may be 2 or 3 generations of armyworm during the summer and autumn period.

**Chemical control:** A range of insecticides are registered for the control of armyworm in turf. For an organic control Eco recommends **Eco Neem** sprayed at first sight of infestation. If possible spray late in the day as the Lawn Armyworm / Larvae are active at night.

**Cultural Control:** By breaking the lifecycle of the armyworm you are able to PREVENT any lawn grubs getting into your lawn in the first place. This is best achieved by keeping an eye out for the soft cocoons on your awnings and gardens and either brushing or hosing them off. This will kill the eggs, hence not allowing the Lawn Grub / Larvae to eat your beautiful lush lawn.

(Sources: <https://www.oanimals.com/Insect/Lawn-Armyworm/Spodoptera/mauritia.html>, <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/agriculture/crop-growing/pests-field-crops/armyworm>, <https://ecoorganicarden.com.au/problem-solver/lawn-armyworm/>, Plant Protection 1 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition Ruth M. Kerruish, Phillip W Unger).