

# Alfalfa Insects I

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**1. Alfalfa Weevil**



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Insects	Identification
<b>Alfalfa Weevil</b> <i>Hypera postica</i> (Gyllenhal)	<p><b>Adult:</b> Light brown with a dark brown, mid-dorsal band along the body, about ¼ inch long with a long snout. Adult populations tend to peak in August. Injures alfalfa by defoliation. Feeds on developing crown buds and leaves, retarding growth and preventing fields from greening up following harvest of the first crop.</p> <p><b>Larva:</b> Legless, yellow to light green with a white stripe down the middle of the back and a black head; about ⅜ inch long at maturity. Injury caused by defoliation of the first alfalfa crop and regrowth of the second crop, primarily in June and July. Early instars chew tiny holes in the leaf terminals. Later instars consume leaf tissue between the veins, buds, and growing tips. Severely defoliated leaves dry up quickly and turn whitish or gray in color (“frosted” appearance).</p>
<b>Clover Leaf Weevil</b> <i>Hypera punctata</i> (Fabricius)	<p><b>Adult:</b> Brown, with small gray, brown, and yellow scales, giving it a mottled and striped appearance; about ¼ inch long. Injures alfalfa by defoliation. Feeds on developing crown buds and leaves, preventing fields from greening up after harvest of the first crop of alfalfa.</p> <p><b>Larva:</b> Legless, tan to light green with a white mid-dorsal stripe and a brown head capsule; about ⅜ inch long at maturity. Injury caused by defoliation of the first alfalfa crop and sometimes regrowth of the second crop. Feeding damage occurs throughout the plant canopy. Hides during the day and feeds at night.</p>
<b>Blister Beetle</b> <i>Epicauta spp.</i>	<p><b>Adult:</b> Broad head, narrow neck, antennae about one-third the body length, long slender legs, about ½ to 1 inch long. Common species may be black, gray or a mixture of these colors and orange or yellow with black stripes. Localized defoliation may occur due to the swarming behavior of blister beetles. Primary concern is the contamination of harvested alfalfa with dead adults which contain the toxin, cantharidin. High concentrations of this toxin in harvested alfalfa may be lethal to horses.</p>
<b>Army Cutworm</b> <i>Euxoa auxiliaris</i> (Grote)	<p><b>Larva:</b> Pale gray body splotched with variable white or light markings, a pale stripe runs along the center of the back and a lighter band is on both sides below the spiracles; about 1½ to 2 inches long at maturity. Possesses five pairs of abdominal prolegs. Injures alfalfa by defoliation. Feeding damage may occur in the early spring as alfalfa begins to green up. May consume all above ground parts of the plant and then move to new areas in large numbers in search of food.</p>
<b>Variiegated Cutworm</b> <i>Peridroma saucia</i> (Hübner)	<p><b>Larva:</b> Pale yellow to brown, with a row of four to six yellow or pink diamond-shaped spots along the back; about 1½ to 2 inches long at maturity. Possesses five pairs of abdominal prolegs. Injures alfalfa by defoliation. Feeding damage may occur throughout the canopy.</p>
<b>Dingy Cutworm</b> <i>Feltia ducens</i> Walker	<p><b>Larva:</b> Pale gray to reddish-brown with mottled pigmentation and light gray V-shaped markings on the back; about 1 inch long at maturity. Each abdominal segment possesses two pairs of equal size tubercles. Possesses five pairs of abdominal prolegs. Injures alfalfa by defoliation.</p>
<b>Alfalfa Caterpillar</b> <i>Colias eurytheme</i> Boisduval	<p><b>Larva:</b> Velvety green with a white and pink longitudinal stripe on each side of the body; about 1½ inches long at maturity. Head and body covered with many tiny hairs. Possesses five pairs of abdominal prolegs. Injures alfalfa by defoliation. Feeding damage begins as small “shot-holes” in the leaves and eventually entire leaves, veins, and stems may be consumed. Damage is most severe when eggs are laid in recently harvested fields.</p>
<b>Green Cloverworm</b> <i>Plathypena scabra</i> (Fabricius)	<p><b>Larva:</b> Pale green with two white, longitudinal stripes on each side of the body; about 1 inch long at maturity. Possesses four pairs of abdominal prolegs. Wriggles violently when disturbed. Injures alfalfa by defoliation.</p>

**Photo Credits:** Adult alfalfa weevil photo used with permission from University of California Statewide IPM Program, J. K. Clark, photographer