

DESCRIPTION

There are over 100,000 species of *caterpillars* so nearly all of us will at one time or another encounter this pest. Caterpillars are the larvae of moths and butterflies.

They do not reproduce exceptionally quickly like other pests, however, they are ravenous eaters and can be the source of total crop loss through complete defoliation if not treated early-on or prevented.

The key to coping with caterpillars does not necessarily lie in the thoroughness of your scouting but more in the knowledge of your foe and methodology and timing of your effort. Be sure to research what type of caterpillars are common to your area, their lifecycles, preferences, and behaviour.

LIFE CYCLE & PREFERENCES

To grow into an adult they go through 4 stages: egg, larva, pupa and adult. Each stage has a different goal - for instance, caterpillars need to eat a lot, and adults need to reproduce. Depending on the type of butterfly, the life cycle of a butterfly may take anywhere from one month to a whole year.

SCOUTING

Caterpillars are typically easy detect, but treatment speed becomes a major priority as the irreversible damage they cause can form rapidly.

Begin by looking for eggs in the immediate area. Following this look for the destructive larvae. The caterpillars will likely be

apparent by either their presence (assuming they are not nocturnal), feeding damage or feces. The feces can be very large and detectable in vast quantities, especially if dealing with one of the bigger moth or butterfly species.

TREATMENT

Nematode steinernema carpocapsae is a parasitic roundworm that finds a larvae host, crawls inside through natural openings and infects the host with bacteria - killing it from the inside out. These microscopic worms are a good choice for naturally dealing with caterpillars.

