

MGA Technical Update Autumn 2010

European Corn Borer

The European Corn Borer is a major pest in Western Europe, damaging the maize by entering into the stem and then boring up/down the stem eating the tissue and just before pupating exiting by boring out a hole.

The caterpillars of ECB are quite small reaching 25 mm in length when fully grown; are dirty white or reddish purple in colour and have brown spots and dark stripes along their bodies.



The caterpillars tunnel into the stem of the host plant and develop hidden inside. Sometimes the only indication of an infestation is the appearance of excrement (Frass) on the outside of the stem, or when a weakened stem snaps, revealing tunnels. The non-descript brown adult moths have a wing span of up to 34 mm and fly at night during June and July.

They can exit at any part of the plant, many exiting just below the 2nd leaf but some below the cob or even through the cob. Where they exit at these lower levels, they cause the crop



to lodge in any direction and so it can look as though there is badger damage with the top half of the crop collapsing in any direction.

In theory the corn borer should not be a problem for UK growers as the climate is too cold for them to establish. However I have seen a number of fields where the damage is too severe and therefore it does look as if the pest has become established in the area.

If this is the case then we may find the pest becoming an increasing problem in the future.

Control of the pest is limited but best options are a good crop rotation (1 in 3 year's maize minimum) and the use of Poncho dressed seed.

