

David Hallauer  
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

### ***Soybean Gall Midge***

A news article recently hit my inbox referencing ‘orange maggots swarming’ into Northeast Kansas soybean fields. It *sounds* concerning, and while Soybean Gall Midge *can* be a pest of significance and can’t be ignored, it also isn’t likely to be the orange swarm noted in the headline. To date they have been found at low levels in just Marshall and Nemaha Counties.

First noted in Nebraska (2011), it wasn’t until 2018 that Soybean Gall Midge (SGM) became a significant pest, expanding into the soybean growing regions of South Dakota and Minnesota south into Missouri and now Kansas. Movement has been slow, requiring two growing seasons after confirmation near the Kansas Nebraska border for it to be confirmed here. Now that it’s here, it *is* a pest worth scouting for, particularly along the Kansas Nebraska border.

The larval form of SGM overwinters near the soil surface. After pupation in early spring, adult midges (a small delicate fly with an orange abdomen and slender body) emerge and lay eggs on the lower portions of stems or bases of soybean plants. These eggs eventually hatch and if timing is right, larvae (first a cream white; later orange) infest stems around the V2 stage when natural fissures and stem cracks allow for entry. Adults don’t damage plants, but the larvae feed within stems causing lodging and even plant death. Infestation can continue through the reproductive growth stages of the soybean with a couple of generations per season expected.

The greatest damage is expected along field edges. Heavily infested fields may exhibit complete losses from the field edge up to 100 feet in then reduced losses the further into the field you go. Infestations will show up as wilting or dead plants and individual plants will likely show a darkening and swelling at the base of stems with brittle stems breaking easily at the ground. The small orange larvae can often be found when stems are split.

Research is ongoing into control options with few good results. Insecticides, including seed treatments have been relatively ineffective. Crop rotation or planting alternative crops next to previously infested fields has potential - if possible. Research on hilling has shown mixed effectiveness and likely isn’t a practical option for many growers.

Your best management is awareness and scouting. If you find field edge lodging or orange maggots in stems and think it might be SGM, contact me via any District Office (or [dhallaue@ksu.edu](mailto:dhallaue@ksu.edu)) so we can monitor pest movement. The 2023 confirmations were all in the northern half of Nemaha County and while expansion *is* expected, it likely won’t be the orange swarm the headline made them out to be. Let’s hope not.

Want more information? Recent SGM research results, scouting tips, and movement maps are available at the Soybean Gall Midge Alert Network: <https://soybeangallmidge.org/>.