

David Hallauer  
District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

### **Moth Musings: Fall Armyworm Trapping Network Update**

The New Year often arrives with a time of reflection. Unfortunately, not all of 2024 was great to reflect upon, including another season of damaging feeding by fall armyworm larvae.

The trapping network instituted across the state in 2023 to monitor fall armyworm moth levels is still getting the bugs worked out (pun intended...) and took another step in 2024 with regular moth number reports. While not intended as a way to *predict* damage, it does paint an interesting picture of what moth numbers are doing during the growing season.

For example, moths' pressure may have been higher earlier in the season than was noticed. Traps went out in mid-July and were checked weekly, with moths found the first week they were out. Numbers varied, but one location had moth captures in 17 of 18 weeks it was monitored. The second had months captured in 11 of the 15 weeks it was monitored. Early season trapping may not tell us a great deal (there's generally ample forage for feeding without a lot of damage), but it is interesting to note there were likely already numbers present in mid-July.

Second, individual field scouting is still important. Moth numbers were reflective of the times we heard feeding reports, but they lagged slightly. Numbers in the trap in the central part of the District were highest shortly *after* the first damage reports. It will take more work looking at weather patterns, consistency among traps, etc... before it is an accurate warning network.

One of the difficulties with trapping is variability between locations. The peak moth flight in the central part of the District occurred in early September with numbers ten times higher than any other single week during the trapping season. Numbers in the trap in the southeast part of the District showed a slight increase during that time frame, but the largest numbers didn't occur until mid-*November*, long after we'd have expected. While they never reached the other trap's levels, numbers had been building over time.

Trapping will continue in 2025 with increased monitoring of weather and harvest timing to see if they affect levels. With luck, we won't get any data – because there won't be any moths. For information on growing season trapping levels, contact me or visit our Meadowlark Extension District Agronomy blog at: <https://blogs.k-state.edu/meadowlarkagronomy/>