Leaf-footed Bugs

Last week Dr. Pat Porter, Extension Entomologist - Lubbock, reported in the Focus on South Plains Agriculture newsletter, Vol.53 no. 4, about an unusual pest he had seen feeding in corn. He identified it as one of the leaf-footed bugs, *Mozena obtusa* Uhler, that has been noted as an important insect attaching mesquite trees.

About this time a crop consultant, John Quillin, sent me a photo from his son in Lubbock showing this insect in heavy numbers on mesquite. Kerry Siders, Extension Agent - IPM for Hockley and Cochran Counties, had a call from a PCO that described a bug like this on mesquites in home landscapes and in the pasture. Blayne Reed, Extension Agent - IPM for Hale and Swisher Counties, has also found large numbers of these leaf-footed bugs on mesquite.

Then on June 25, Dr. Porter sent an e-mail stating that these bugs and another similar looking bug were decimating pea plants in a pea seed increase trial at the Lubbock Research and Extension Center. What he wrote was, “We have a leaf-footed bug at the Lubbock Center that is decimating the pea seed increase plots. This one is about 3/4 inch long and is grey. It looks a lot like *Mozena obtusa* that I reported on in FOCUS last week, but it is grey instead of yellowish. It might even be *Mozena* – there were *Mozena* in the pea field as well. It is certainly a Coreid – I keyed it out but have not had time to work on species ID.”

Photo credit: Blayne Reed

http://txppipm.blogspot.com

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Anyway, there was around one insect for every 5 – 7 pea plants and they had been feeding many days before being discovered. The damage looks like thrips damage on steroids: young leaves wrinkled and yellow and the growing points decimated. Every plant in the field was damaged. Monti Vandiver stopped by yesterday .... and he drove by the pea field. I asked him if he wanted to look at the insect damage and he said he thought the field was a herbicide damage trial. Blayne scouted some farmers market gardens today and found the insect on adjacent weeds. His theory is that once the weeds, which had been treated with herbicide, decline, the bugs will jump on the peas. I think he is right.

I chose to spray bifenthrin (on the pea field at Lubbock) because that is the pyrethroid I had the most of. After application there were very few insects in the field, but I did not see many dead ones. It could be that the repellent effect of pyrethroids drove them out of the field before they were killed. Or maybe they were not killed? I don’t know. They were still abundant in my corn field that is adjacent to the pea field. . . . . I have been looking in cotton and can find no evidence that the insect is feeding there; I can find them but they seem to be incidental. I know for sure that they feed on corn, and if their numbers stay high they might be a pest during the ear stages, much like a stink bug. I am finding egg clusters in corn.” But since the e-mail Blayne has documented *M. obtusa* feeding in the terminals of cotton.

Dr. Porter and Blayne Reed have done an exceptional job identifying and documenting the potential threat of these two Coreid bugs to peas and possibly other legumes.
White-lined Sphinx Caterpillars

The caterpillar stage of the white-lined sphinx (*Hyles lineata*) has caught the attention of a number of folks north of Amarillo. Again, John Quillin sent a photo of the caterpillars feeding on weeds in a pasture and Robert Bowling e-mailed asking about them. I came across these caterpillars a couple of years ago while working on a potato project in Dallam County. These caterpillars were feeding on a specific weed along the edges of potato fields and in pastures.

The moth is commonly known as the hummingbird moth and the hawk moth and the caterpillars are known as hornworms. Caterpillars widely vary in color from green with yellow, white, and/or black markings, but others are black forms with yellow markings. They can reach unto 3 to 3 1/2 inches long and have a distinct spine on the back end. The hornworms develop on a variety of plants (willow, apple, elm) but mostly on Portulaca (moss rose), primrose, and wild grapes. Fortunately, they should not be an issue in field crops, but could visit the vegetable garden.