

Watch for Black Grass Bugs

With the recent warm temperatures, the crested wheat grass has shot up in growth. Unfortunately, this is also the time of year that we normally see the black grass bug explode, according to Mary Rumph, Powder River Extension Agent.

People will first notice an “anemic” look to the grass in some areas, where it should be a healthy green color. The black grass bug literally “sucks the juices” out of the leaves, leaving a whitened, tough and stringy leaf. The black grass bug (*labops hesperius*) is one of the earliest pests to emerge in the spring and is able to feed in very cold weather. The young nymphs hatch from eggs that have been inserted into grass stems. The nymphs molt five times during their development into adults, feeding the entire time.

The insects aren’t regarded as too great of a threat unless they move into crested wheat hay meadows which they have been known to do in recent years, commented Rumph. The best control is done while they are still along the roadsides in a concentrated area. Local producers have found that low rates of malathion (1 to 1 ½ pints per acre) are effective for three to four years of control. The insecticide sevin is labeled for black grass bug control.

“They are fairly easy to kill,” added Rumph. The reason they are first seen in the ditches along the highway is due to the eggs laid in grass that wasn’t grazed heavily. Intense grazing is one of the recommended biological controls.