

# Corn Earworm (Tomato Fruitworm)

## *Helicoverpa zea* (Boddie) (Lepidoptera: Noctuidae)

(Origin: Native)



Corn Earworm Adult

**Primary Host:** Corn, tomato, beans, peppers, eggplant, tobacco.

**Damage:** Larvae feed on marketable portion of each vegetable crop it attacks, often making them unmarketable. Usually enter corn ears through the tip.

**Management:** Monitor with pheromone traps.

**Biocontrols:** Several predators and parasites, including ladybird beetles, lacewings, predatory bugs, and parasitic flies and wasps attack earworm eggs and larvae

**Cultural Controls:** Cut off the tips of damaged sweet corn ears or plant extra tomatoes or beans.

**Physical Controls:** Mineral oil can be applied to the corn silk to prevent egg laying.

**Chemical Controls:** Contact your local Penn State County Extension Agent for more information.

<http://www.extension.psu.edu/extmap.html>

### Insect Description:

**Adults:** Buff colored; with irregular spots and markings on wings. About 1½” wing-span.

**Pupae:** Initially a shiny reddish brown, it becomes dark brown when adult emergence approaches.

**Larvae:** Light green to tan or other colors, with light and dark stripes running lengthwise on body. Head capsule is light brown.

**Eggs:** Preferred site for laying is fresh corn silks.

**Life History:** Females prefer to lay eggs on corn or tomato plants, usually near flowers or terminal leaflets. After hatching, larvae quickly begin to bore deeply into the fruit, contaminating it with feces. Larvae prefer green fruit and seldom enter ripe fruit.



Corn Earworm Pupa with Parasite