



Fall Armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*)

Symptoms and Control through Poison Baiting

Pest Identification & Behavior

Fall Armyworm infestations usually begin in small grains or grass cover crops and later migrate into maize and other crops. The pest gets its name from its habit of moving in large numbers like invading armies. Cool and wet spring weather favors its rapid development.

Larvae are greenish-brown, about 1–1.5 inches long, with a thin stripe down the center and orange stripes along the sides. Feeding occurs mainly at night, causing ragged leaf margins or complete defoliation in severe cases.

Damage Symptoms

- Ragged feeding on leaf margins
- Stripping of leaves leaving only midribs
- Damage first noticed along field borders
- Larvae hiding in soil or crop residue during daytime

Why Poison Baiting Works

Fall Armyworm larvae feed actively at night and are strongly attracted to food-based baits. Poison baiting ensures the larvae consume the insecticide along with the attractant, making it highly effective when spraying is difficult.

Preparation of Poison Bait (per acre)

- Rice bran / Wheat bran – 10 kg
- Jaggery (molasses) – 1 kg
- Recommended insecticide (Bt, Spinosad, Emamectin benzoate or Chlorantraniliprole as per label)
- Water – sufficient to prepare moist crumbly mixture

Mix bran and jaggery thoroughly. Dissolve the insecticide in water and add to the mixture. Mix well and keep covered for 3–4 hours for fermentation to improve attraction.

Application Method

- Apply bait in the evening after 4 PM
- Place small handfuls near plant base or between rows
- Do not place bait directly on leaves
- Repeat after 7–10 days if infestation persists

Additional Management Tips

- Regular field scouting at least twice a week
- Early-stage control gives best results
- Encourage natural enemies like parasitoids and predators
- Use pheromone traps for monitoring moth population
- Maintain field sanitation and destroy crop residues