



PestFacts WA

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Native budworm caterpillars detected in northern cropping regions

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Jessica Cole (Independent Rural) found native budworm caterpillars in a podding Jurien lupin crop at Carnamah. An average of 2.5 caterpillars per 10 sweeps was recorded, with caterpillars ranging in length from <5 mm to 10 mm.



Native budworm caterpillar from a Jurien lupin crop at Carnamah. Photo courtesy of Jessica Cole (Independent Rural).

Technical Officer Surya Dhakal (DPIRD) recently found native budworm caterpillars in flowering canola crops at Ogilvie (Northampton) and Yardarino (Dongara). These caterpillars are likely to have hatched from eggs laid during July, coinciding with large moth flights detected in pheromone traps at both sites. Caterpillar numbers ranged from 0 to 2 larvae per 10 sweeps, with larvae ranging in size from 5 mm to 10 mm. The variation in caterpillar size suggest that moths laid eggs over several weeks.



Native budworm caterpillar in sweep net sample of canola crop at DPIRD's surveillance site at Ogilvie.

Checking for native budworm larvae

The presence of native budworm caterpillars in crops may not be immediately obvious, as there may be very little feeding damage on leaves. Instead, they prefer to feed on developing buds, pods and seeds, where large caterpillars can cause significant economic damage. Native budworm caterpillars can be distinguished from diamondback moth caterpillars by their behaviour. When disturbed, native budworm larvae do not wriggle vigorously or suspend themselves from a silken thread.

Growers and consultants are encouraged to sweep net or otherwise check for caterpillars in multiple locations in susceptible crops from flowering and pod fill through to maturity. Sweep netting can be less reliable when the vegetation is wet, or when crops are stiff or dense. Alternative sampling methods include using a beat sheet or cutting plants from several places in the crop and, at each sample point, shaking plants into a bin or white tray.

The easiest method for assessing caterpillar numbers for the entire crop is to take small areas from the crop, either a tenth of a square metre, or an equivalent number of plants to those found in a square metre. During crop checking, record the number of larvae according to their size. Economic thresholds exclude very small larvae, as larger larvae consume significantly more pods and seeds. Refer to DPIRD's [Native budworm spraying threshold](#) guide to determine whether insecticide spraying is warranted. After spraying, conduct follow up monitoring to confirm if the insecticide application was effective. Continue checking moth flight updates through the resources listed in the next section, as further moth migrations may lead to further egg laying.

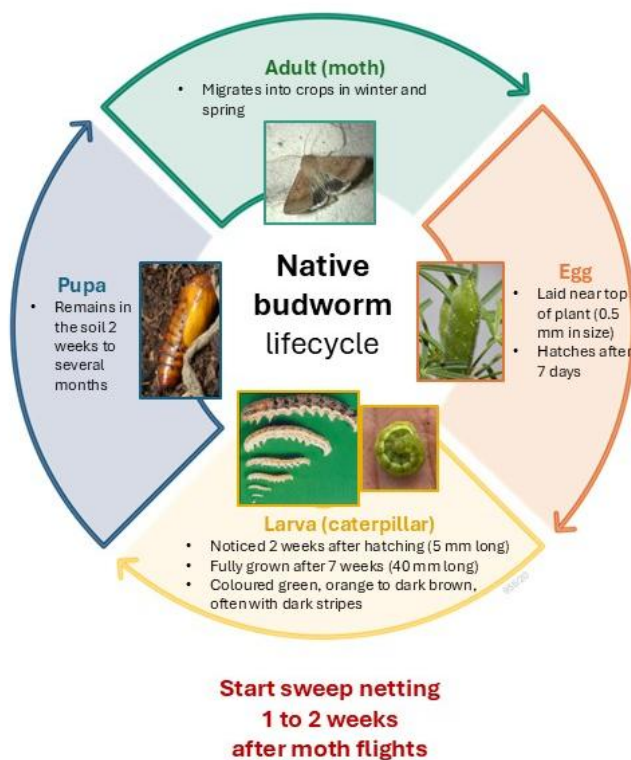


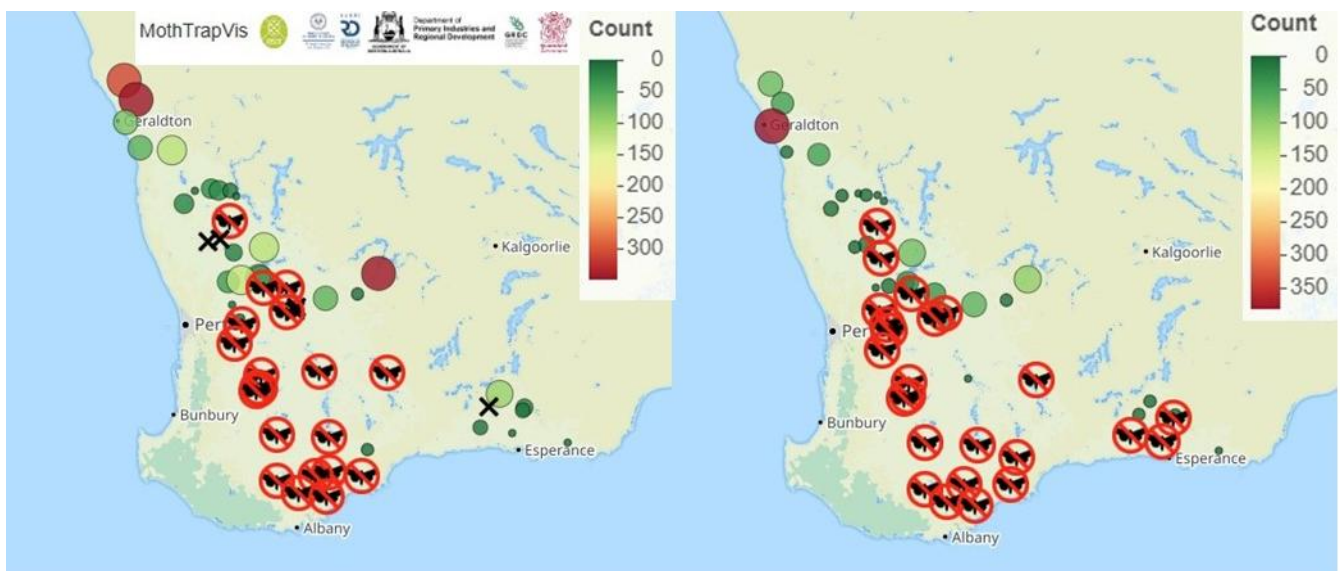
Figure 1: The native budworm lifecycle.

Moth flight updates

The latest native budworm moth trap results from volunteer trappers and DPIRD staff are available to download. You can view a live map of native budworm trap results via the MothTrapVisWA page. Viewers need to select the desired trapping date range at the bottom of the map. Recent results from MothTrapVisWA are shown in the figure below.

Native budworm moth migrations have continued to be detected at DPIRD's northern surveillance sites during early August. The highest moth counts recorded in pheromone traps for the most recent 14-day trapping period include: Moonyoonooka (380 moths), Ogilvie (75), Nabawa (48), Yandanooka (48) and Yardarino (8).

Moth numbers recorded during August in all other regions have been low, and with fewer moths trapped than in previous weeks. The larger counts from the past 7 days include: Southern Cross (lentils 31 moths), Badgerin Rock (lupins 10 moths) and Dowerin (canola 9). No large moth flights have been detected in the great southern and Albany regions.



Source: Cesar Australia

Figure 2: Native budworm moth trapping results from 15 to 28 July 2026 (left) and 29 July to 11 August 2026 (right). X indicates no data, and the red and black moth symbol indicates no moths in trap.

Management

Insecticide options for the control of native budworm caterpillars can be found in DPIRD's 2026 Winter Spring Insecticide Guide.

Further information

For more information about the native budworm, and its impact on crops, refer to the department's Native budworm page.

To read about native budworm activity earlier in the season, and how to manage this pest, refer to the 2026 PestFacts WA articles in:

- Issue 12 Waves of native budworm moth migration detected
- Issue 9 Early native budworm moth flights detected in northern and central regions

- Issue 7 Would you like to host a native budworm moth trap this year?

For further information on native budworm contact Principal Research Scientist Dusty Severtson in Northam on +61 8 9690 2160 or Research Scientist Christiaan Valentine in Northam on +61 8 9690 2160.

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Diamondback moth activity update

- Locations ranging from Ogilvie to Howick



An adult diamondback moth.

DPIRD surveillance staff continue to detect diamondback moth (DBM) activity across the WA grainbelt through their trapping network at 22 sites. The moth numbers shown on the map represent the total number of adult DBM captured in pheromone traps during the fortnight between trap inspections. The highest moth catches were recorded at: Bolgart (148 moths), York (132), Wongan Hills, Howick and Cascade (119). Refer to the map below for moth numbers recorded at other sites.

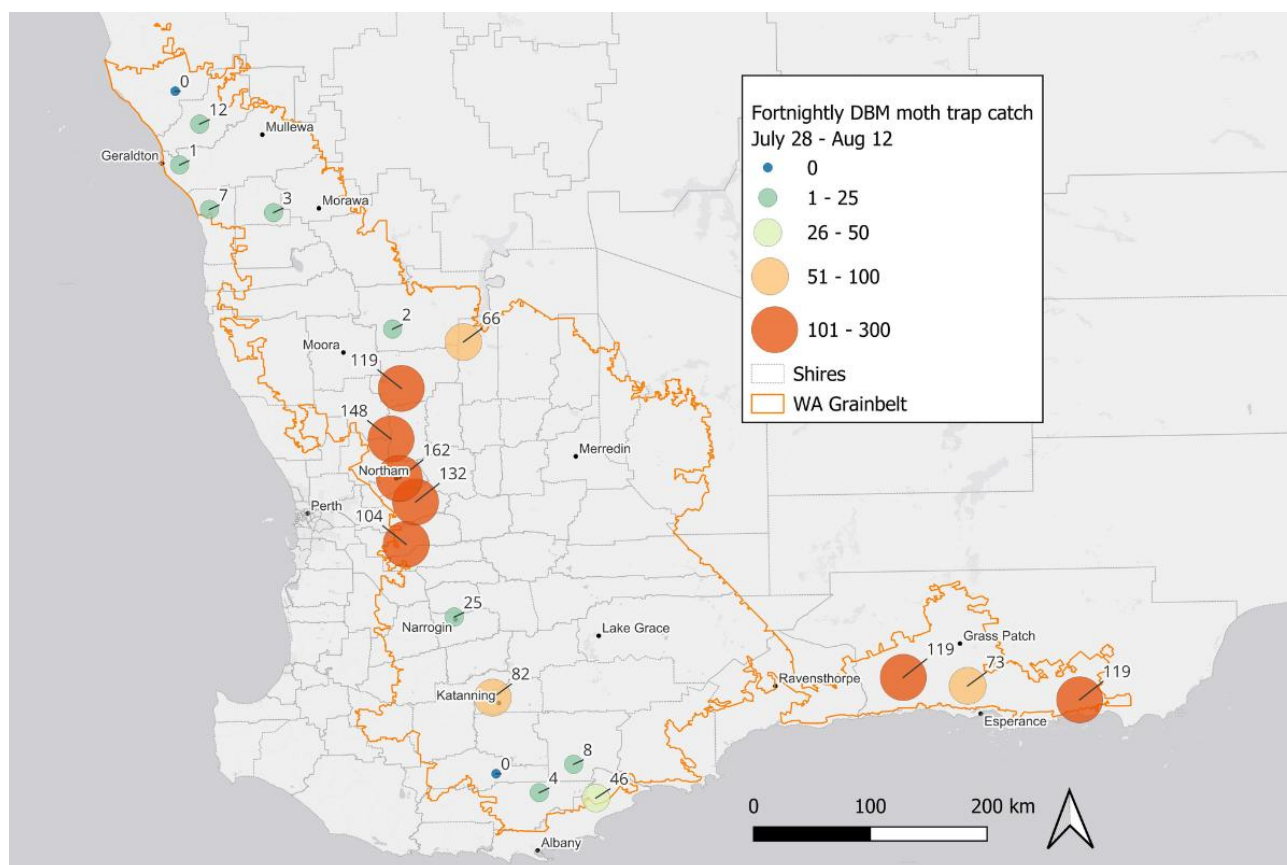


Figure 3: Diamondback moth (DBM) numbers captured in pheromone traps across the WA grainbelt and recorded between 28 July and 12 August 2026. Values represent the total number of moths caught per trap during the preceding fortnight.

DPIRD staff have also recently found low numbers of DBM caterpillars (fewer than 10 per 10 sweeps) in canola at the trapping sites: Mingenew, Dongara, Wongan Hills, Bolgart, York, Cascade, Gibson and Howick.



A diamondback moth caterpillar.

The PestFacts WA team has received a report of above threshold numbers of DBM caterpillar numbers in canola near Mukinbudin (more than 100 per 10 sweeps). There has also been a report of 5 DBM caterpillars per 10 sweeps in canola near Perenjori.

DPIRD research has shown that if more than 100 moths are caught in a fortnight, there is approximately a 50% chance that DBM caterpillars will be detected in canola within two weeks. Growers are reminded to sweep their canola crops to check for DBM caterpillars, particularly as temperatures start to increase. Most larval feeding damage occurs during spring. The risk declines as the crops reach advanced growth stages that are less vulnerable to caterpillar damage.

Thresholds for control of DBM caterpillars in crop are:

- pre-flowering (stressed crop): 30 or more caterpillars per 10 sweeps
- pre-flowering (no stress): 50 or more per 10 sweeps
- early to mid-flowering: 50 or more per 10 sweeps
- mid to late-flowering: 100 or more per 10 sweeps
- podding: 200 or more per 10 sweeps.

Further information

For advice on monitoring and managing DBM activity this season, refer to the 2026 PestFacts WA Issue 13 article [Monitor canola for diamondback moth caterpillars](#) and Issue 7 article [Caterpillars are active](#).

For more DBM information, refer to:

- DPIRD's [Diamondback moth and its management in canola and crop weeds](#) factsheet
- GRDC's [Diamondback moth best practice management guide - southern](#) factsheet
- GRDC's [Managing diamondback moth](#) video.

For more DBM information contact Senior Research Scientists [Dustin Severtson](#) in Northam on +61 8 9690 2160 or [Svetlana Micic](#) in Albany on +61 8 9892 8591.

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