

# Western bean cutworm egg mass identification



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Western bean cutworms lay eggs in pretassel corn, on the underside of upright leaves around or just below the tassel or on the upper side of leaves near the leaf collar (right).

- There are an average of ~55 eggs per mass, although the odd mass can have as few as 10, or over 100.
- The shape of the egg mass is usually a bit 'squarish' with sharp angles.
- A reddish dot in the center of an individual egg indicates it has been fertilized.
- Eggs hatch at the same time. After hatch, the larvae eat the egg shells.



*a squarish egg mass, with all eggs fertilized*



*consuming egg shells*

Egg masses change color as they develop over a week, from bright white to tan to purple.  
*freshly laid -----tan, 2-3 days-----darker tan, 4-5 days-----purple, about to hatch*





**Correct ID is important when scouting. Are these western bean cutworm egg masses?**



Yes! hatched, eaten  
\*All that remains is the pearly outline



No! Stink bug  
\*Fewer eggs in the mass.  
\*Eggs have spikey crowns.



No! European corn borer  
\*Fewer eggs in the mass.  
\*Mass is flat and round.

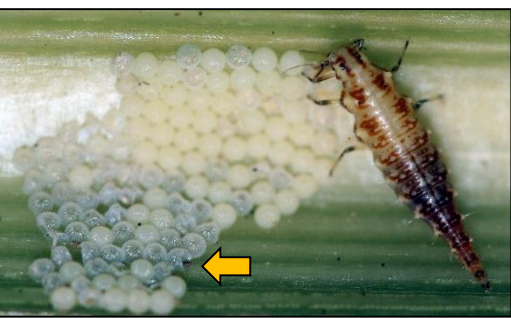


No! Ladybug  
\*Oval, yellow eggs  
\*Few eggs in the cluster.

**Not all egg masses are 'good' or hatch completely – its important to recognize and note this, because sometimes a significant portion of the eggs in a field do not appear healthy.**



Only a portion of the eggs in this mass hatched. The remaining eggs probably were not fertilized. Female moths store sperm after mating, and they can run out of supply as they age.



Generalist predators eat WBC eggs. This lacewing poked into individual eggs in this mass, damaging the outer shells (arrow) and emptying some.



The multicolored egg mass on the left has a lot going on. A few larvae successfully hatched, but most eggs appear fed-on or they never developed. The ugly egg mass on the right has many deflated eggs that appear to be rotting.



Eggs in this mass were parasitized by a wasp called Trichogramma. A wasp larva developed in each WBC egg, eating the developing caterpillar inside. Holes in the eggs indicate where the wasps emerged. The adults are very tiny (arrow).