



Department of
Agriculture and Food



Backyard Buddies

Your monthly guide to animal and plant pests, diseases and weeds

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Coming up apples!



Codling moth larvae on apple surface.

If you pick up an Australian gardening magazine it's easy to assume that codling moth, a major pest of apples and pears, is just one of many pests we have to manage to produce delicious and marketable fruit. Some articles omit to say that codling moth is not present in Western Australia.

We intend to keep it that way as WA is one of the few apple producing regions in the world free of codling moth.

The first sign of any codling moth presence is a hole in the fruit, plugged with the excreta (frass) of the larva inside. The larva or grub is white to light pink in colour with a dark brown head and feeds on the insides of the fruit heading for the core, favouring the protein rich seeds. They measure 1.5 to 2cm in length at maturity and as they feed, their tunnels fill with their reddish-brown frass which starts extruding from the entry hole, and feed in the fruit for several weeks before the mature larva tunnels its way out of the fruit and finds a place under the bark of the tree or a nearby crevice where it pupates.

The moth itself is not particularly striking; its wings are a mottled grey with a dark iridescent coppery-brown band at the wing tip. It can easily fit on your finger tip with a body length just under a centimetre and its wingspan less than 2cm. The moths are active for only a few hours at dusk from October and April and during this time they mate and lay their tiny (~1mm) eggs on leaves and fruit. In mid-spring the eggs hatch and the larva burrow into the fruit, and so the cycle continues.

WA is currently free of codling moth, not because it can't find its way here, but when it does manage to do so, industry and government work together to control and eradicate it. Codling moth was first detected in Albany in 1903 with the last outbreak in 1998; 20 occurrences have been successfully eradicated. From individual backyard trees in areas such as Perth, Collie and Narrogin to hundreds of hectares of commercial orchards impacted; predominantly in Bridgetown and Dwellingup, the costs of these eradication programmes impact industry, government and the community. Given the possibility of future incursions of codling moth into WA, the Department of Agriculture and Food (DAFWA) and industry work together to monitor for codling moth in the Perth metropolitan area, south-west town sites and commercial pome fruit orchards.

Together with strict quarantine processes, community awareness and reporting is essential in the early detection of this pest. If you have apple or pear trees, do monitor them frequently. By knowing the usual appearance of your trees and the common pests, you are best placed to spot when something is out of the ordinary. If you see something unusual, say something. Phone 1800 084 881 or email info@agric.wa.gov.au.