

Are You Eating My Crops? 1: Silver Y moth

The silver Y moth (*Autographa gamma*) is a migratory species, but in areas where it is unable to overwinter severe infestations are known to occur, making it a potential crop pest, and the first in our new 12 month series called 'Are you eating my crops?'. Individual pests chosen for this series have not yet been reported in Texas, but are on the 'Watch List' due to their high level of pest importance. During this series we will cover several different crop pests, what to look for, and what they look like.

The young larvae of silver Y moths feed on the foliage of their host plants and tend to "skeletonize" the leaves, leaving plants with a brownish appearance. Older caterpillars eat the whole leaf, starting from the edge and working in toward the midrib until its entirety is consumed. Larvae can scrape the skin off of fruit, like grapes or tomatoes, and feed on the contents within. The larvae are polyphagous and are found on many different hosts, some of which are: corn, cereals, grasses, fiber crops, Brassica spp. (like cabbage), and other vegetables, including beet, peppers, and lettuce. The larvae feed at night, spending the daylight hours concealed, pressed to the underside of leaves. Female silver Y moths take nectar from flowers, and can often be seen feeding during the day or early evening. Females can lay from 500 to 1,000 whitish eggs in a single batch or in small batches, which they attach to the low-growing plants.

The silver Y moth forewings are marbled silvery gray, to brown, to velvety black, with a distinct white lowercase "y" in the center. The hind wing is light brown with a dark brown marginal border. The wingspan is about 36 to 40 mm. The larval caterpillars range from bright green to dark olive green, with a dark green dorsal line edged with white, and a yellow spiracular line edged with green. They only have three pairs of prolegs: two pairs on abdominal segments 5 and 6 and one pair on the last anal segment. The silver Y moth pupates on the lower leaf surface or within the first centimeter of soil.

If you have question or concerns regarding the headlines, OR you believe you have identified a silver Y moth infestation, contact invasives@shsu.edu for further instructions.



Adult Silver Y moth (*Autographa gamma*). Note characteristic "y" on forewings. Credit: Julieta Brambila, USDA APHIS PPQ



Silver Y moth larva. Note the white spiracular line edged in green that runs laterally down the body of the caterpillar. Credit: Paolo Mazzei