



## Egyptian Cottonworm

### *Spodoptera littoralis*

This pest is native to Africa, Asia, and Europe. This species has been intercepted many times in the United States at ports of entry mainly in cargo and plant material where it can hide among the leaves and flowers as eggs or larvae. If able to establish in the U.S, the highest risk area would be in the western to southwestern states due to host availability, climate and distance but the moths will be able to migrate across the nation including Canada. Hosts plants include tomatoes, potatoes, corn, broccoli, cabbage & other agricultural crops.



Adult *S. littoralis*, photo by Bernard Fransen, Bugwood.org



*S. littoralis* larva, photo by Biologische Bundesanstalt für Land- und Forstwirtschaft Archive, Bugwood.org

#### Damage:

This species is considered to be one of the most damaging pests. Larvae tend to feed on the most tender parts of the plant, such as new leaves, but will feed on growing points, stalks, buds, young shoots, and fruit. They also gnaw into the stems of the plant which allows disease to enter the plant. Leaves are either eaten whole or left skeletonized by the larvae. Added stress to the plant decreases the yield of crop collection.

#### Photos:

Biologische Bundesanstalt für Land- und Forstwirtschaft Archive. *Spodoptera littoralis*. Bugwood.com. December 2009. April 2015. *S. littoralis* larva. [http://wiki.bugwood.org/Spodoptera\\_littoralis](http://wiki.bugwood.org/Spodoptera_littoralis)

Fransen, Bernard. *Spodoptera littoralis*. Bugwood.com December 2009. April 2015. Adult *S. littoralis*. [http://wiki.bugwood.org/Spodoptera\\_littoralis](http://wiki.bugwood.org/Spodoptera_littoralis)

**Information:** Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey. Solanaceous Hosts Commodity-based Survey. April 2015. <https://caps.ceris.purdue.edu/node/579>

#### Description:

Eggs are somewhat flattened, spherical, and laid in clusters with a “felt-like appearance” from hair scales left behind from the female during egg laying. The eggs are whitish-yellow, changing to black when ready to hatch due to the larva’s large head showing through the egg’s transparent shell. When larvae first hatch, they are white. As they develop, they vary in color from blackish-gray to dark green, becoming reddish-brown to whitish-yellow with three yellow strips running lengthwise down the body, and are hairless. They are nocturnal and can be found at the base of the plants or under pots during the day. When ready to pupate, they push through the soil at the base of the plant and form a silken cocoon. Adult moths have gray to reddish-brown wings with paler lines along the veins.