

## ZEBRA CATERPILLAR *Lepidoptera: Noctuidae Ceramica picta*

### DESCRIPTION

The head, thorax, and forewings of **adults** are reddish-brown, usually with purple mottling on the wings. The abdomen and hind wings are light gray. The wingspan is 35 to 40 mm. **Larvae** are 35 to 40 mm long when mature. Larvae are marked with prominent black and yellow longitudinal stripes. The mid-dorsal line is pale and may be well developed or absent. The top stripe is black, top-lateral stripe and stripe below the spiracles is cream to bright yellow, and the spiracle stripe and bottom stripe is black and marked with numerous white lines and spots. The underside and legs are light red-brown or yellow. The head is reddish-brown and without dark arcs or reticulations.



Zebra caterpillar larva



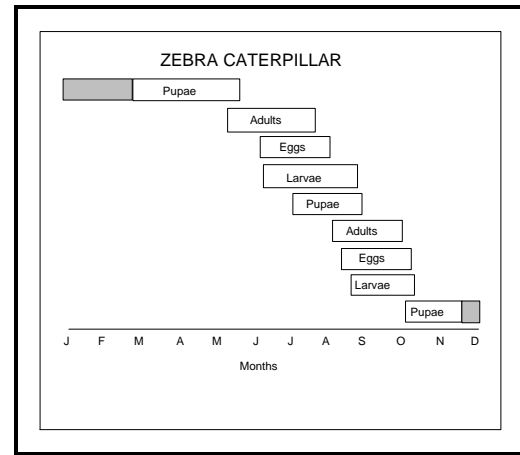
Zebra caterpillar adult

### ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

Larvae are general feeders on foliage of sugarbeets, alfalfa, clover, mint, and cruciferous crops such as cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower. Larvae feed during the day on the leaves of plants causing ragged-edged leaves. Young larvae feed together in groups, but later separate and feed individually. This cutworm occurs sporadically but becomes damaging during local outbreaks.

### DISTRIBUTION AND LIFE HISTORY

The zebra caterpillar is distributed in Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Utah, Nevada, and California in the northwestern United States and in British Columbia in Canada. This species overwinters as larvae or pupae in the soil. Adults emerge in June and lay eggs in clusters on the leaves of host plants. Eggs hatch in five to seven days and larvae begin feeding on the foliage. Larvae feed for four to six weeks before pupating in the soil. Larval damage is most evident in July and early August. Adults emerge in late August and lay eggs for a second generation. Larvae feed for four to six weeks during September and October, then overwinter either as mature larvae or pupae in the soil. There are two generations each year.



### MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL

The factors that contribute to the sporadic occurrence of this pest in the northwest are not well known. Parasites and virus diseases that help regulate populations of other cutworms also may be important in regulating the population of zebra caterpillar. Insecticides may be used to control larvae, but should be applied when the larvae are small. See the Pacific Insect Control Handbook for a list of registered insecticides and recommendations on particular crops.

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