

LEATHERJACKET Diptera: Tipulidae *Tipula dorsimacula*

DESCRIPTION

Adults, which are also called craneflies, are about 25 mm long with long legs that may drop off when the insect is handled. The abdomen is bright orange. Mature **larvae** are about 35 to 40 mm long, gray to gray-brown. Larvae are wormlike and lack legs. Larvae have a small pointed head that retracts into the thorax when disturbed. The tip of the abdomen has characteristic fingerlike projections. The exoskeleton or skin is tough and resembles leather, thus the common name, leatherjackets.

LIFE HISTORY

Leatherjackets overwinter in the soil as nearly mature or fully mature larvae. Adults begin emerging in late April or early May and deposit eggs in crop debris, particularly alfalfa refuse. The larvae initially feed on decomposing crop debris but later feed on developing tubers.

IMPORTANCE

Severe feeding damage caused by leatherjacket larvae may occur in fields planted to potatoes following spring plowing of alfalfa. Larvae feed on tubers, causing round punctures varying from shallow depressions to deeper holes.

MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL

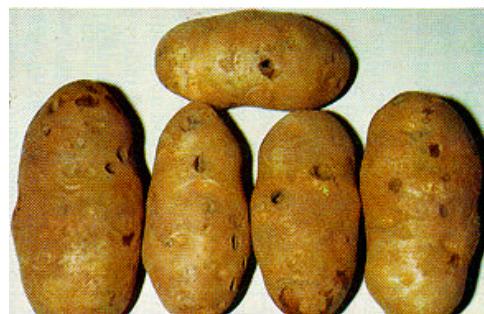
Leatherjackets are seldom a serious problem in potatoes, and control is seldom necessary. Feeding injury may appear similar to that caused by cutworms, white grubs, wireworms or slugs. Control consists of avoiding spring incorporation of alfalfa green manure crops in areas subject to infestations.



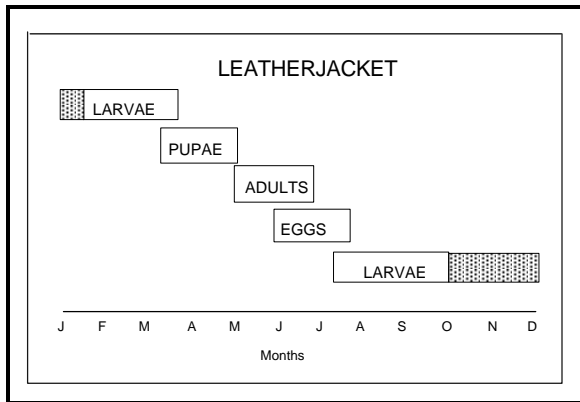
Leatherjacket adult



Leatherjacket larva



Leatherjacket larval feeding damage



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