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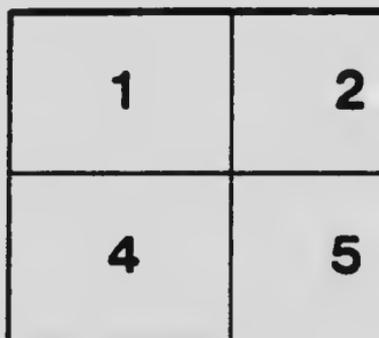
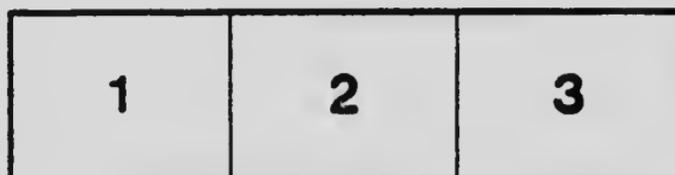
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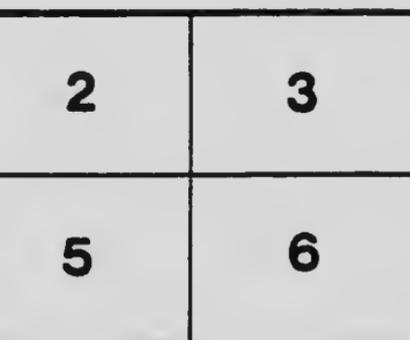
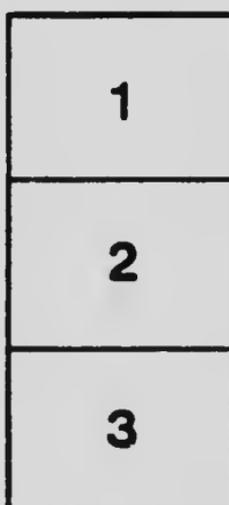
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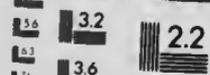
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# THE WESTERN WHEAT-STEM SAW-FLY.



Fig. 1. This is an average area in a field of wheat infested with Western Wheat-stem Saw-fly. Note how the stems are bent and broken. Photo taken August 6th, 1920. (Original.)

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# The Western Wheat-Stem Saw-fly.

(*Cephus occidentalis*)

## Plants Injured

The Western Wheat-stem Saw-fly is a four-winged insect which attacks wheat, rye, barley, and some of our native grasses. Its damage at the present time is chiefly confined to wheat. This crop suffers a very great annual loss, much greater than the average farmer realizes. By actual count in one field in August, 1920, as many as 55% of the wheat stems were affected. In the corner of another field over 90% of the straws contained a worm. The heads of these straws contained shrunken grain, and the stand in general was below normal. Similar conditions prevail over a wide area of the Canadian West.

## Evidences of Injury

There are several symptoms by which the injury may be detected.

(1) A short time before the crop is ready for the binder, especially if it has been windy, many stalks will be bent over or broken off near their bases. The field will appear as if it had been visited by hail. The prevalence of this condition will depend upon how badly the field is affected.

(2) If the affected straws are split open lengthwise with a knife, there can be seen a fine yellowish powdery substance sometimes scattered along, and sometimes closely packed together, inside the straw. This is formed by the larva or worm as it works its way down the stalk. This is one of the best means of identifying the work of the saw fly.

(3) The larvae are found inside the stalks. These may be distinguished from other cereal infesting larvae by means of a tube-like projection which extends from the hind end of the body.

(4) Just before preparing their winter quarters, the larvae cut a ring around the inside of the stems about an inch above the surface of the ground. When the affected stems are pulled, they break away at that point very readily.

(5) In some cases the heads of the affected stems turn yellow prematurely. This symptom may be confused with injury by other grain insects, and cannot be relied upon unless accompanied by some of the other more reliable evidences of the presence of the Western Wheat-stem Saw-fly.

## Life History

The adult insect may be found during the last half of June and the first half of July resting in characteristic position, head downward, upon the stalks of grains and grasses. Eggs are laid near the top of the plant, and the young larva as soon as hatched begins to eat its way downward through the hollow stem, enlarging this hollow as it descends. About the first week in August, it reaches a point in the stem even with the surface of the ground. On its way down, it leaves a trail of yellow dust, which has been mentioned



Fig. 2. Each straw shows the characteristic dust like material left by the larva as it descends the stem. The second stem from the left shows a larva (indicated by the arrow) in its natural position. (Somewhat enlarged). Photo taken August 6th, 1920. (Original.)

already. About an inch above the ground, it cuts off the stem and then plugs up the end of the short stub next to the root and prepares for wintering between the plugged end and the root. It remains in this position during the winter months. When warm weather comes again, it pupates, and along in June the adults begin to emerge and egg laying begins again for the new annual brood.

#### **How to Control the Western Wheat-stem Saw-fly**

Few farmers realize the amount of damage that is done by the Western Wheat-stem Saw-fly. Where the crop is moderately light, it is sometimes necessary to rake the stubble to get many of the bent and broken straws. Control measures are as follow:

(1) **Practice crop rotation.** The Saw-fly attacks wheat, rye, and barley only, among the grains. Oats, corn, potatoes, etc., are immune from attack. At least do not sow wheat after wheat and under no circumstances practise what is known as "stubbleing in." The adult saw-flies are not strong on the wing, and they will not travel far from the fields where they spent their larval life.

(2) **Plow the stubble lands of infested crops to a depth of six inches.** Cover all stubbles so that the harrows will not drag them out when the ground is being worked in the spring. The plowing should be done any time between the first week of August and the end of May. The larvae live over the winter in the hollow bases of the stubbles, and when these are turned under that deep, the saw-flies are unable to emerge in early summer. Edges of fields where infestation is usually worst should receive especial attention from the plow. In case of spring plowing, the land should be worked and packed before the end of May.

The above suggestions on control deal with preventing attacks by the insect. Once the stems are infested, nothing can be done to prevent damage. Therefore, fight the Western Wheat-stem Saw-fly during the autumn and spring.



