



# Agronomy Watch:

## CORN LEAFHOPPER

### THREAT

Corn leafhopper is a pest that is on Ontario's radar, having travelled on storm fronts as far north as New York State in 2024. The pest can vector pathogens that can cause corn stunt symptoms.

### BACKGROUND:

Corn leafhopper is a pest that often impacts the southern United States. However, the pest is now moving further north on strong storm fronts. So far, it has arrived late in the season, causing limited damage to the corn plant. Direct damage by feeding can impact yields. Honey dew produced by feeding encourages the growth of black, soot-like mould, impacting photosynthesis and the health of the plant. However, the indirect damage, and by far the most concerning, is the pathogen transmission that causes corn stunt symptoms early in the corn lifecycle.

### IDENTIFICATION

Corn leafhopper is a wedge-shaped insect about three to four millimeters in length. Colouring ranges from a light yellow to tan. A key distinction between corn leafhopper and other leafhoppers is that they have two black dots, bordered by a light white halo, which are located between their eyes. Both adults, identified by having clear wings, and nymphs, which have no wings, can damage corn. Corn leafhoppers have piercing, sucking mouth parts.

When scouting, look for this pest on the shady, underside of leaves, and in the whorl.

Corn leafhopper can vector several pathogens. Symptoms can appear one to eight weeks after infection, and may appear as any or all of the following:

- Yellow streaks on the margins of the infected leaves
- Yellowing or reddening on the leaf tips or as streaks
- Shortened internodes
- Deformed and smaller ears and kernels
- Poor grain fill
- In extreme cases, plant death can also occur

Overall, the severity of the symptoms will vary depending on when the corn plant was infected.



Corn leafhopper with the characteristic two black spots between the eyes. Picture courtesy of and used with the permission of Danielle Sekula, IPM Extension Agent, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.



This information is provided by Grain Farmers of Ontario agronomy team and the OMAFA Field Crops Team.

## FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS

Many external factors influence the corn leafhopper, such as temperature, humidity and host plants.

- They require a living host year-round to overwinter.
- Strong storm fronts contribute to the pest moving further north during the growing season, along with milder winters, allowing them to overwinter closer to Ontario.
- The pest's arrival earlier in the season, during vegetative growth, could have a significant impact on the Ontario corn crop.
- Later planted corn is at a higher risk.

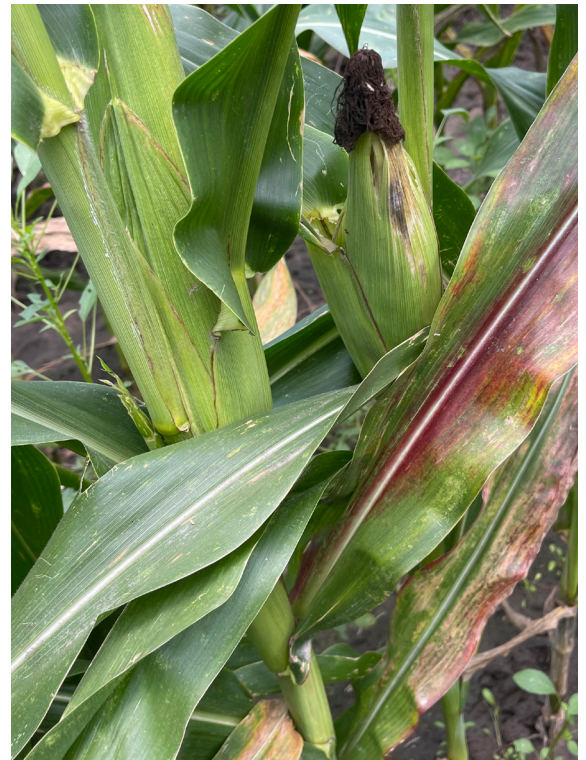
## CONTROL:

As this pest has yet to enter Ontario, awareness is key.

- Scout throughout the season.

Should it arrive, multiple practices will be required to manage the pest:

- Plant early
- Control volunteer corn plants



Some of the symptomology from corn leafhopper. Pictures courtesy of and used with the permission of Danielle Sekula, IPM Extension Agent, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

## WHAT TO DO TODAY

Monitor and scout for the pest and corn stunt symptoms throughout the season.

Grain Farmers of Ontario financially supports the corn leafhopper trapping network, where sticky traps are set up across the province to trap and monitor whether this pest arrives in Ontario. More trap participants are needed.

Contact Tracey Baute, Field Crop Entomologist, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, for more information on the trap network, or for identification of the insect pest or corn stunting.

## MORE INFORMATION

[Corn leafhopper, a new pest threat](#)

[Corn Leafhopper Map](#)

[Biology and Management of Corn Leafhopper](#)

