



As you already know a local landscape company has sounded the alarm concerning a worm like pest on the Palo Verdes in the mid to east valley. The Riverside County Department of Agriculture (Indio office) sent samples of the larvae to Sacramento for identification. Keith Selnick, an investigator for Riverside County Ag, informed me that the worm was identified as a moth larva in the Noctuidae family. To pin point the exact genera and species an adult moth would be needed.

Noctuidae is the largest family in the Lepidoptera order (moth and butterflies) and is very common in North America and world wide. North Dakota State University states that in North America there are at least 3,040 species in 23 families. To put into perspective there are more species of noctuid moths in North Dakota alone than resident bird species in America north of Mexico.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture classifies this pest as a class C. Class C is defined as a pest subject to no state enforced action outside of nurseries except to retard spread. The regulation is discretionary to County Agriculture Commissioners and is generally not quarantined.

The life cycle entails the adult moth laying her eggs in the soil and when they hatch they can feed on the foliage of various plants and trees. They seem to attack stress plants so checking the irrigation and possibly fertility is important. So far I have not seen any significant damage to any Palo Verde or find any one that has seen the pest in the Coachella Valley before.

The Riverside County Ag Department did recommend that control measures could be taken for extreme infestations. Control can be achieved through the use of several insecticides including a new class of biologicals.

Although I don't think there is any reason to panic I do think that as landscape managers we need to be diligent in the inspection of our properties. Many pest and diseases can be minimized through astute observation and educating our employees.

Best regards,

Sonny Klimowicz