

# **Image: Why grasshoppers are plaguing Alberta's farms**

July 28 2015

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# Why grasshoppers LOVE droughts

Drought-like conditions don't just lead to wildfires – they're also perfect for grasshoppers. While not all grasshoppers are agricultural pests, some have a voracious appetite for the same crops humans grow. Biologist Rosa da Silva explains how the tiny insect can become a big problem.



In normal conditions, predators like wasps and microorganisms like fungi help keep grasshopper populations in check by killing both young and adult insects.



Adults are only 1-1.5 inches long, but can eat 100mg of dry plant material per day. Combined with a drought, this can be devastating for farmers.



Warm, dry conditions help accelerate grasshopper reproduction; the insect can go from egg to adult in just 4-6 weeks.



Females lay egg pods with up to 100 eggs per pod near potential food sources, which include cereals, grasses and other crops.



Droughts aren't good for fungi, which are marginalized by the heat and lack of moisture, allowing grasshoppers to flourish.

Western farmers, particularly those in Alberta, have had a rough

summer.

Hot, dry conditions are hurting crops, wildfires are forcing people from their homes and now grasshopper populations are reaching [epidemic proportions](#).

Most types of grasshoppers aren't considered "pests", but a handful of them are - and the insects can cause a great deal of damage.

In the infographic above, McMaster biologist Rosa da Silva explains why [grasshoppers](#) flourish in droughts, and why that's bad news for farmers.

Provided by McMaster University

Citation: Image: Why grasshoppers are plaguing Alberta's farms (2015, July 28) retrieved 15 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-07-image-grasshoppers-plaguing-alberta-farms.html>

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