

## PICKLEWORM

by Eric Day and Alexandra Spring



larva

**DESCRIPTION:** Yellowish-white, brownish head; with numerous dark spots across segments when young. Older larvae are greenish. Up to 3/4 inch long.



pupa

egg

**COMMON HOST PLANT(S):** Cucumber, squash, pumpkin, muskmelon, cantaloupe and squash.

**DAMAGE:** Feeds on flowers and leaf buds. Tunnels flowers, terminal buds, vines and fruits.

**DISTRIBUTION:** Southeastern part of country as far north as Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, and Kansas. Winters in southern Florida and Texas; spreads northward late in season.

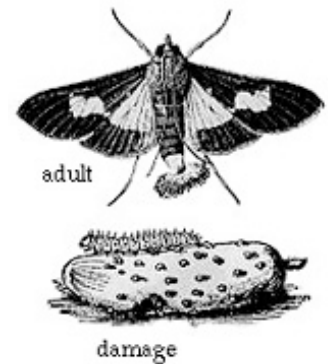
Fig. 1: Early life stages of Pickleworm

**LIFECYCLE:** Pickleworms overwinter in warm climates, such as Florida, and migrate north as temperatures rise. Females begin to deposit eggs in midsummer on hairy cucurbit surfaces. Within about three days small pickleworms hatch and begin feeding for a period of two week. Larvae may feed on flowers, vines, and fruit, but their preference is for developing leaf or flower buds. Pupation occurs in cocoons formed inside rolled leaves. Moths emerge in approximately a week.

**CULTURAL CONTROL:** Plant early; very early spring plantings are seldom damaged. Destroy vines, unused fruits, adjoining weeds and trash as soon as crop is harvested. Spading or plowing in early fall will bury pupae. Stems infested with pickleworms can be slit and the borers removed; heap dirt over the injured stem to encourage rooting.

**ORGANIC/BIOLOGICAL CONTROL:** No known organic/biological control for pickleworm at this time.

**CHEMICAL CONTROL:** Begin treating with a registered insecticide plants at first sign of worms in blossoms and buds; worms must be killed before they enter the fruits.



adult

damage

Fig. 2: Pickleworm moth and example of larval damage