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By Fred Searle

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## Social media alerts growers to moth invasion

Diamondback moths return to UK brassica fields with fears the infestation may be as serious as in 2016



Diamondback moth can cause major crop losses in brassicas

**A** large influx of diamondback moths has landed in the UK that may be comparable to the infestation seen in 2016 which devastated brassica crops.

According to data from Twitter, the influx spotted on 12 June appears to be 10 times larger than the numbers seen in May, when diamondback moths appeared on British shores for the first time this year.

The intelligence was picked up by AHDB's Pest Bulletin, which monitors the activity of field crop pests and now includes reports from social media by 'citizen scientists,' namely growers and enthusiasts who give real-time information on insect numbers.

AHDB knowledge exchange manager Dr Dawn Teverson said: "The moths are a migratory pest, so we monitor activity in Europe to predict when they may arrive in the UK. Social media is a useful tool to

help us give growers advance warning that they need to manage their crops for this potentially damaging pest."

In 2016, during the last big influx, Christmas sprouts and kale were particularly hard hit, with growers experiencing a 15-20 per cent loss in yield. The value of UK brassica crops was estimated to be £265 million in 2017, according to Defra's statistics.

Research from Rothamsted has shown diamondback moths are now resistant to pyrethroid insecticides, which are often the first choice for farmers to protect against moth pests.

AHDB's crop protection senior scientist, Bolette Palle Neve, is actively working on the issue. She said: "We know the arrival of significant numbers of diamondback moths is a big concern for brassica growers. However, it's important growers do not turn to pyrethroids to protect their crop, as they are likely to

have little effect on the moths and could affect insects which naturally attack them.

"Minecto One (cyantraniliprole) is approved for use in brassicas except for leafy brassicas so to cover use in these crops we are working with the government's Chemicals Regulation Division and Defra to secure an emergency authorisation for use of Benevia 10OD (cyantraniliprole). We expect an outcome any day and we will announce the outcome to industry as soon as we can."

The current British weather conditions may also help, as they are not ideal for diamondback moth survival, but growers should still keep a close eye on crops.

Grower Will Illife of Southern England Farms said: "The moths are currently everywhere. As you walk through the crops, it seems like there are thousands flying up."

Diamondback moths are a pest of brassica

The numbers of sightings of diamondback

many key pests. You can sign up to receive

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crops including broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower, as well as oilseed rape. They damage leaves and can lead to 100 per cent crop loss. They are often described as a 'super-pest' as they have a rapid lifecycle and have been found to be resistant to some insecticides.

moths are recorded daily and can be tracked [here](#). More information about control options for the pest can be accessed [here](#).

AHDB also sends a weekly pest monitoring email detailing activity for

the Pest Bulletin Alert [here](#).

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