

Mexican Rice Borer Update Blake Wilson

An infestation of the Mexican rice borer, *Eoreuma loftini*, was detected in sugarcane at the LSU AgCenter Dean Lee Research Station in Rapides Parish. This is the first detection in Rapides Parish and is the farthest north the pest has been observed in Louisiana. The borers have also been observed infesting sugarcane in Avoyelles Parish. These detections mark the first expansion since the Mexican rice borer was found in the Bayou Tech sugarcane production region in 2018.

The Mexican rice borer has been infesting sugarcane in low numbers in the westernmost Louisiana sugarcane production regions since 2012. Damaging infestations were observed in a small number of fields in Vermillion Parish in 2019. In 2020, the Mexican rice borer is the predominant borer species present in some regions including Vermilion, Lafayette, and St. Landry Parishes. While L 01-299 has shown resistance to both borer species in small plot trials, reports from crop consultants indicate this variety has not been spared from Mexican rice borer infestations this year. Many fields of all varieties in those regions have required insecticide applications.

Scouting for the Mexican rice borer is similar to the sugarcane borer, but there are a few differences. Mexican rice borer larvae frequently enter into leaf mid-ribs and leaf sheath tissue before boring into stalks. Leaf sheath injury in the form of horizontal lines of discoloration is common with Mexican rice borer. Growers and consultants are advised to make treatment decisions based on the same economic threshold used for sugarcane borer of 5% of stalks with larvae in leaf sheaths to manage Mexican rice borer or mixed infestations of both species.

Mexican rice borer range expansion in Louisiana 2008–2020.

