

Caterpillar

First instar

Length: 2 to 6 mm
Width: 0.5 to 1.5 mm
Head: 0.6 mm
Duration: 1 to 3 days

Appearance

- Greyish-white, almost transparent body, sometimes with dark hairs.
- Head darker and wider than the body.
- No coloured bands, although some dark stripes may be visible after a few days.
- Front and rear filaments barely visible.

Behaviour

- Eats its egg case after it hatches.
- Then feeds on the leaf where it hatched, making semi-circular holes, starting in the centre of the leaf.
- If disturbed, drops and clings to the leaf by a silken thread.



Caterpillar Second instar

Length: 6 to 9 mm
Width: 1 to 2 mm
Head: 0.8 mm
Duration: 1 to 3 days

Appearance

- White, black and yellow bands.
- Yellow triangle on front of head, ringed with two yellow bands.
- Front filaments visible, but small (0.3 mm). Rear filaments look like two pimples.



Caterpillar Third instar

Length: 10 to 14 mm
Width: 2 to 3.5 mm
Head: 1.5 mm
Duration: 1 to 3 days

Appearance

- Yellow and black bands on abdomen more showy and defined than in 2nd instar, but still indistinct on thorax.
- Front filaments as long as head – would extend out from head if angled forward.

Behaviour

- Unlike first and second instars, feeds on leaf edges, not in the centre.
- If disturbed, drops and curls up into a ball.



Caterpillar

Fourth instar

Length: 13 to 25 mm
 Width: 2.5 to 5 mm
 Head: 2.2 mm
 Duration: 1 to 3 days

Appearance

- Body covered in clearly distinct yellow and black bands.
- Front filaments twice as long as rear filaments.
- Indistinct white spots on false legs.



Caterpillar

Fifth instar

Length: 25 to 45 mm
 Width: 5 to 8 mm
 Head: 0.6 mm
 Duration: 3 to 5 days

Appearance

- Clear patterns and brighter colours.
- Black bands are wider and velvety looking.
- Front filaments almost three times longer than rear filaments.
- First pair of legs much shorter and closer to head.
- Distinct white spots on false legs.



Behaviour

- May be seen elsewhere than on milkweed plants.
- Moves about looking for somewhere to pupate.

