Egg laying

Each female locust can drill a hole in the ground and lay eggs in a pod at a depth of 2–10 cm. A single female will usually lay one to three egg pods provided ample green vegetation is available. Pods can be laid in a minimum of five day intervals during summer or 10–14 days during autumn. A collection of egg pods laid by a number of locusts is termed an 'egg bed'.

Each pod contains 30–70 pale yellow eggs 5–6 mm long and 1.5 mm in diameter, dependent on season (more eggs per pod during summer compared to spring and late autumn). After laying, the pod is sealed with a frothy plug to protect the eggs.

Female locusts can begin laying 7–10 days after fledging (i.e. final moult to adult) if there is sufficient green vegetation. In very dry conditions egg laying can be delayed for many weeks. After migration, laying usually does not commence for ten days or more.

Egg beds

Egg beds typically occur in bare patches of compact soil. Hard ground protects the egg pods. While soft ground is not their preference, locusts will lay in soft ground if there is no other option.

During summer, egg laying usually occurs in areas with some grass cover. Non diapause (develop immediately) egg pods are predominantly laid vertically in the soil at a depth of 6–8 cm. (Eggs that develop at a later date are said to be ‘in diapause’.)
In autumn, mostly diapause eggs are laid in bare soil (frequently on clay pans or hard ground along tracks and fences) with egg pods typically oblique to the ground surface (or ‘J curved’) at a depth of 3–5 cm.

Female locusts often make test drill holes in the soil without laying any eggs. Therefore, to check whether adult locusts have actually laid eggs, dig up the area and check for evidence of pods containing eggs.

Egg beds are typically patchy with many tight clusters of individuals’ egg pods and may vary in size from a few square metres to several hundred square metres.

**Egg development**

Eggs need warmth and moisture to develop and will suspend development (diapause) if these needs are not met.

In summer, eggs may hatch within 14–16 days. Eggs laid in autumn will probably remain dormant through winter and resume development and hatch the following spring with the warmer weather. These egg pods will normally be laid closer to the surface than summer-laid (non-diapause) eggs.

Breeding normally occurs from spring through to autumn, depending on conditions, with two to three generations hatching through that period if conditions are favourable.

**Reporting**

All plague locust activity must be reported to your Local Land Services.

Mark all egg beds (star picket, GPS) and monitor them for emerging nymphs in the spring. This will occur as the weather warms up and generally occurs from late August (west of the State) through to October (central areas). Eggs laid in late spring or summer will usually hatch within a few weeks under favourable conditions.

**Figure 4:** Open pods at an egg bed.

**Figure 5:** Nymphs emerging from their egg pods.

**Figure 6:** Adult locust eating emerging cereal plants.

**More information**

- NSW Department of Primary Industries
- Australian Plague Locust Commission
- Local Land Services

**Acknowledgments**

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