Simple Grasshopper and Locust Controls

ECHO Inc.

(Summarized from Agrimissio's November 1994 "Notes and Comments.") Grasshoppers and locusts cause extensive damage to a wide variety of crops and can be persistent in gardens year after year. To control these pests, farmers herd poultry through their fields to eat the insects, plant "repellent" bands of sorghum around their maize or millet fields, or keep a permanent soil cover to discourage egg-laying in the soil. Small piles of straw placed around the edges of the fields often serve as night shelters for the insects, where they can be collected and killed. Effective traps include sprinkling baits (like bran with molasses coated with neem or an insecticide) around fields and water-filled pitfall traps with lights hung above them as attractants (like the mouse traps described in EDN 20-1). Another way to reduce local grasshopper problems is through careful observation of the insects' egg-laying habits. The females push their abdomens into the ground and lay about 50 eggs 5 cm deep, covering the eggs with a foam. A hoe can bring the eggs to the surface, exposing them to heat and drying out or predation; if eggs are collected, they can be used as poultry feed. By hoeing up the eggs, a community may be able to reduce its grasshopper population by 80-90%.

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