

Bacillus Thuringiensis Encyclopedia Article

Bacillus Thuringiensis

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Bacillus Thuringiensis

Bacillus thuringiensis, or *B.t.*, is a family of bacterial-based, biological insecticides. Specific strains of *B.t.* are used against a wide variety of leaf-eating lepidopteran pests such as European corn borer, tomato hornworms, and **tobacco** moths, and some other susceptible insects such as blackflies and mosquitoes. The active agent in *B.t.* is toxic organic crystals that bind to the gut of an insect and poke holes in cell membranes, literally draining the life from the insect. *B.t.* can be applied using technology similar to that used for chemical insecticides, such as high-potency, low-volume sprays of *B.t.* spores applied by aircraft. The efficacy of *B.t.* is usually more variable and less effective than that of chemical insecticides, but the environmental effects of *B.t.* are considered to be more acceptable because there is little non-target toxicity.