



Advanced Helicoverpa Biocontrol

Registered low use rate: 75mL/ha prepodding chickpeas
Apply early to establish NPV before *Helicoverpa* pressure builds



SELECTIVE



COST
EFFECTIVE



ONGOING
SUPPRESSION

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An early NPV strategy for *Helicoverpa* IPM in chickpeas

Act before podding pressure builds

Helicoverpa management in chickpeas is usually focused on applications during podding, when larval feeding can cause direct yield loss. But waiting until *Helicoverpa* numbers reach threshold can narrow management options. Acting sooner with NPV — while larval numbers are still below threshold — establishes virus in the crop before pest pressure builds. This approach has been used effectively by chickpea growers and advisers for many years, and the registration of Vivus Max at 75 mL/ha provides a cost-effective way to incorporate NPV into *Helicoverpa* IPM programs. Developed for use during the vegetative to early flowering period, the 75 mL/ha rate is best thought of as a way of “inoculating the crop” with NPV.

Inoculating the crop with NPV

For the strategy to work, there needs to be some larval activity in the crop. Field experience indicates that larval numbers as low as 0.2 larvae per m² can be sufficient to support crop inoculation. When larvae ingest the NPV in Vivus Max, they become infected and die, releasing more virus back into the crop environment. This secondary virus production can contribute to suppression of later *Helicoverpa* pressure as the crop moves into the higher-risk flowering and podding stages.

Because the goal is early inoculation rather than knockdown of a threshold population, timing can be integrated with routine spray operations, such as a grass herbicide, fungicide, or other compatible pre-podding spray. This reduces application cost and makes the strategy easier to fit into overall crop management.

It also allows growers to introduce NPV without necessarily adding a dedicated spray pass.

Extend suppression and minimise pod damage

Preservation of beneficial species is central to the strategy. Unlike most insecticides, Vivus Max is highly selective, allowing beneficials to remain active in the crop. In chickpeas, ants are a useful example. They can cover much of the crop surface, directly attack *Helicoverpa* eggs and larvae, and consume NPV-infected larvae. In doing so, they can help move virus through the crop. This interaction between NPV and beneficial activity is a key reason why targeting low *Helicoverpa* populations can have effects beyond the initial spray event.

Compared with a chemical-only approach, the benefit of an NPV strategy is not simply the control from one application. The value comes from shifting the population curve. By infecting sub-threshold larvae before podding, Vivus Max can provide ongoing background suppression, reduce the risk of high-pressure situations developing, delay the development of economic threshold, reduce the likelihood of multiple chemical larvicides, and minimise pod damage once the crop reaches the critical reproductive stages.

Reduce pressure on later decisions

There is also a strong case to incorporate NPV to help manage resistance and residue risk. Chlorantraniliprole remains one of the most important chemical options for *Helicoverpa* in pulses, but it is a high-risk molecule if overused. In lower-pressure seasons, establishing NPV early

can reduce the likelihood that a later conventional larvicide will be needed. This helps preserve key chemistry while helping growers manage maximum residue limit (MRL) considerations and declaration requirements at harvest and delivery.

The practical message for advisers and growers is simple: do not wait until *Helicoverpa* numbers become an urgent issue during podding. Where low, sub-threshold populations are present in vegetative or early flowering chickpeas, a 75 mL/ha Vivus Max application can establish NPV in the crop, preserve beneficials, and reduce pressure on later chemical decisions. Used strategically, Vivus Max is selective, cost-effective and provides ongoing suppression — a population-management tool, not just another insecticide.

