



..... STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSES MOUTH

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Well, there is no doubt! We live in Nebraska and it is definitely March! This unsettled weather and its extremes has always been a landmark for all of us that have grown up here. It is kind of hard to explain to others that have not experienced. Only in Nebraska can you have four seasons within a week or for that matter a few days. One thing is for certain with the passing of the first day of Spring...we are well into the busy season for our farmers and ranchers.

With that heavy snow from February we are seeing the dividends with the moisture that it brought to a parched soil. The wheat and cool season grasses are both greening up and looking good. However, as is the nature of this part of the country we will soon need more moisture to get where we would like to be. This early and heavy growth of wheat does bring some concerns that we may want to be aware of if you raise or manage wheat acres. I just read a CropWatch article that I think is pertinent to our wheat growers and might should be heeded as I do concur with their predictions.

Last week stripe rust was found in several counties in southern Kansas and leaf rust was found in northeast Kansas, indicating the likelihood that leaf rust overwintered in Kansas due to mild winter temperatures. Stripe rust overwintered in western Colorado. The most recent update from Colorado indicates that stripe rust has been confirmed in the eastern part of the state, just northeast of Denver. The risk of stripe rust spores blowing into western Nebraska from northeast Colorado is real and adds to the risk of spores blowing in from Kansas. If you wonder about the wind, think of March 23.

Development of the wheat crop, as was predicted due to the warm temperatures that have prevailed in January, February, and March, to be earlier than normal. It doesn't take much to see that! Given that stripe rust and leaf rust have been confirmed in Kansas, it is recommended that growers start scouting their wheat fields for early disease detection. Other diseases to look for include powdery mildew and leaf spot diseases such as tan spot and Septoria tritici blotch. You can see pictures of the diseases by going to: <http://cropwatch.unl.edu/2016/wheat-rust-kansas-start-scouting-nebraska-fields>

According to Nebraska Extension Crop Pathologist, Stephen Wegulo, current and projected weather conditions over the next several weeks are favorable for development and spread of wheat diseases. He highly suggests that you monitor the disease situation in your field and consider an early fungicide application at the jointing growth stage especially if you see stripe rust and in cases where powdery mildew and leaf spot diseases are developing to moderate or severe levels. If you make an early fungicide application, it will most likely be necessary to make a second application at 50-100% flag leaf emergence to protect the flag leaf. To maximize returns, consider a low cost generic fungicide for the earlier application and a higher cost fungicide for the flag leaf timing. In the event that the weather becomes favorable for Fusarium head blight, a third fungicide application may be warranted in some fields. If you make two or three applications, ensure compliance with label restrictions. Each fungicide has a maximum amount and number of times that it can be applied in one growing season and these limits should not be exceeded. I suggest that you don't just do a windshield tour - get out and look at the wheat!

GMO Labeling: Last week I talked about consumers and pressures from groups that can really make a difference in how we raise and market agricultural crops. There is a lot of misinformation and downright myths and lies out there concerning Genetically Modified Organism or GMO's. I cannot even describe the vitriol that some people show when they discuss this issue. It would take hundreds of pages and hours to talk about all that is going on in this arena. If you want to know more about the true science I suggest that you go to. Long overdue, a biotechnology website has been developed to enlighten the public concerning questions consumers might have about genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and their engineered incorporation into the world's food supply. Launched by the Biotechnology Industry Organization, a trade association that represents biotechnology providers, the site is called "GMO Answers" and seeks to dispel myths about so-called "Frankenfoods" while at the same time educating non-farm types about the many benefits of GMOs.

Interested readers can visit the new website at www.gmoanswers.com, which will provide answers on a wide range of questions regarding GMOs, including benefits, health and safety issues, regulatory requirements, international approval status, and many other worthwhile topics. The past couple of years have been a challenge in terms of legislation, ballot initiatives and media articles aimed at agricultural biotechnology. The attack on GMOs has taken several forms in the western states – from proposed mandatory labeling requirements, to proposed bans on the planting of GMO crops, to proposed state and local permits and environmental impact statements for GMO seed production and crop research.

There are of course a lot of different thoughts on labeling of GMO's in food products but I can tell you what can happen when misinformation ends up, when states pass legislation concerning just that. Hawaii passed a law concerning GMO's and it has had dramatic effect on food production and farming. Vermont just passed a GMO labeling law that is having far reaching effects on food manufacturers. A domino affect happens, and we have to look no further than this past week when a fourth major U.S. food maker reportedly will put GMO labels on foods that contain genetically modified ingredients. Kellogg's label reportedly will say "produced with genetic engineering" to comply with Vermont's labeling law that goes into effect this summer. Campbells, General Mills, and Mars are the other three food companies that say they'll label their products containing GMO foods. More food makers are expected to follow suit. Here we go... Hold on to your hat!

The preceding information comes from the research and personal observations of the writer, which may or may not reflect the views of UNL or Nebraska Extension. For more further information on these or other topics contact D. A. Lienemann, Nebraska Extension Educator for Webster County in Red Cloud, (402) 746-3417 or email: dlienemann2@unl.edu or on the web at: <http://extension.unl.edu/statewide/webster>