



## ..... STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSES MOUTH

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April 22, 2016 Edition

I have been asked if we had a million dollar rain. Of course the short answer is “Heck Yeah!” I can tell you this, this rain probably saved at least a million dollars in our area in pasture and wheat and for the future crops that have yet to be planted. Just the few days before the rain I was out checking pastures and wheat fields and was dismayed at what I saw. The grass and wheat both had gone backwards from where it was two weeks previously. They both had a blue look to them and dryness was evident wherever I looked. You could once again row the wheat fields and that is not a good thing for this time of year. Now comes the big – however! I have said time and time again that wheat has fooled me way too many times as it does seem to have 9 lives. I hope this is the case this time as well. I would have ventured a guess that we had some damaged growing points and we still may have, but what a difference a week can make. These fields don’t even look the same.

I was actually checking for any signs of disease or rust and believe it or not, I did not find anything other than some frost damage on some bottom leaves and of course the shriveled and dry look of plants that desperately needed water. That being said however, we must now be sure to check our wheat fields for fungus, powdery mildew and disease with this moisture. My guess is that we had some fields that have it, but it was held in check by the dry weather and dry conditions in the fields. The incessant winds of course help with this natural anti-fungus remedy – which is also an anti-yield conundrum.

When you go out and check, you might pay particular attention to the potential for striped rust, and aphids which can carry barley yellow dwarf virus to the healthy wheat plants. If you see stripe rust in your field and favorable weather conditions (moisture, wind, and cool to moderate temperatures) are forecast, consider applying a fungicide to protect the wheat crop. The recommended timing is at 50% to 100% flag leaf emergence. However, if the risk of stripe rust development and spread is high, an earlier application at the jointing growth stage may be warranted. Consider the yield potential, resistance level of the wheat variety planted, and the price of wheat when making the decision to spray. According to Dr. Stephen Wegulo, Nebraska Extension Plant Pathologist, you want to keep in mind that stripe rust can form new races that can overcome the resistance in varieties rated as resistant, and resistance can be overwhelmed if disease pressure is high. Therefore, even if you have planted a resistant variety, consider a fungicide application as a second line of defense. Fungicides that are effective in controlling rust diseases. You can find a list of potential fungicides by searching for North Central Regional Committee on Management of Small Grain Diseases (NCERA-184). If you prefer, we have copies of the document in our office.

Let’s take a look at the aphids. Aphids are being found in several Nebraska wheat fields. I had not found any as of about Wednesday of this past week, but that doesn’t mean that they aren’t around. Regular scouting of wheat for aphids while checking for disease is important because numbers can increase rapidly. There are several types of aphids in wheat which may be found in Nebraska. The identification of the pests is key because the damage potential varies among species. If you find aphids and want to know more about what you have I suggest going to NebGuide G1284 - “Cereal Aphids” for more information. Once again you can do a search or call our office and we have copies of this publication as well.

As I mentioned earlier, Aphids can transmit barley yellow dwarf virus to wheat. So we must act quickly if you find aphids. The most common vectors of the barley yellow dwarf virus (BYD) include the (a) English grain aphid, (b) oat bird-cherry aphid, (c) greenbug, and (d) corn leaf aphid. You can’t fix BYD but you can at least help keep the wheat plants from getting infected. Once again, barley yellow dwarf cannot be controlled once it occurs, but controlling aphids can reduce infections. It is recommended that aphids be controlled based on actual aphid damage (rather than the potential for transmitting barley yellow dwarf. This is because aphids that fly into the field after an insecticide spray can still transmit the virus. Symptoms of barley yellow dwarf include yellowing or purpling of flag leaves from the tip to the bottom and from the edges to the midrib which can significantly reduce yield. As if we don’t have enough problems!

**Earth Day:** As I write this column it is actually Earth Day 2016 (April 22). This event is now entering the 46th year of a movement that created to inspire, challenge ideas, ignite passion, and motivate people to action. According to the Earth Day website: [www.earthday.org/](http://www.earthday.org/), in 1970 (a little after the hippy movement) the first Earth Day was used to give voice to an emerging consciousness, channeling human energy toward environmental issues. While I have no problem with environmental stewardship, or for that matter any attempt to help our ecosystem, I just hope that like so many other things over the past decade that today’s Earth Day has not been utilized for the purpose of an ideology. Why would I say that?

In all the years I have been watching, I have come to the conclusion that Earth Day has been hijacked by extreme climate change alarmists. The specter of “global cooling” at first, then later - “global warming”, and now - “man-made global climate change” has overshadowed all other environmental goals, as alarmists issue dire warnings about catastrophic climate change and push for stringent regulations and taxes on carbon. The myopic emphasis on an ideology blinds environmental activists to serious environmental problems and solutions that may not even involve climate. Yet Earth Day, all across the nation, should introduce citizens to earth’s diversity, highlighting both its destruction and beauty, its problems and solutions. Focusing solely on any one issue masks the wondrous variety that the earth has to offer. Despite the gloom and doom, virtually none of the projections of the original Earth Day from 46 years ago came to pass, but it is good that we celebrate “Pachamama!”

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](mailto:dlienemann2@unl.edu) or on the web at: <http://extension.unl.edu/statewide/webster>