WILL SOYBEAN APHIDS BE A PROBLEM THIS YEAR?

EXTENSION
Nemaha County
1824 N St, Ste 102 ● Auburn NE 68305
402-274-4755 ● www.nemaha.unl.edu

Is there potential for aphids in soybeans this year? Several years ago we had a late season infestation of soybean aphids and some producers treated fields late in the growing season as soybean aphids reached economic threshold levels in southeast Nebraska. Recently soybean aphids have been found in low numbers in northeast Nebraska. If we have cooler temperatures, this is conducive to soybean aphid population increases, but the hot temperatures we have had recently should slow down or stop aphid reproduction. Aphids usually do not start populating in southeast Nebraska until July. To date I have not heard of any infestations in southeast Nebraska, but I will plan to scout some fields this week. It is just important to scout fields to see if you have an infestation and then monitor the population. It is also important to observe the number of natural predators of aphids in your soybean fields, i.e lady bugs and/or lacewings. Treating fields early for convenience if populations are not at threshold levels or just for convenience is a waste of time and money and you may kill natural predators of the soybean aphids and actually have to treat again.

If we have high temperatures (90 degrees or higher) into August, this will help to limit population increases. While I have not identified any soybean aphids in soybean fields yet in southeast Nebraska, remember soybean aphid populations can increase at extremely high levels under favorable conditions. Ideally soybean aphid population increases are fastest when temperatures are 70-80^0 F. Populations can double in 2-3 days. If we have a period of cool weather conducive to soybean aphid growth and development in August, soybean aphids could reach economic threshold levels. The economic threshold for treatment of soybean aphids is 250 aphids per plant average for a field (25 plants) with the population increasing. This is generally for soybeans through the R4 (full pod stage). With soybeans planted later this year, there may be more of a concern for later infestations to increase in population and cause economic damage if temperatures cool down as we move toward fall.

It is important to scout for soybean aphids on a weekly basis, especially when soybeans are flowering and begin setting pods. If you are in your soybean field, the recommendations for scouting are to randomly check 20-30 plants per field and determine the average aphids per plant for this field. If the level of aphids is 250 per plant, you have about seven days to schedule treatment. If you have a lot of natural pests in the field, such as lady beetles, green lacewings or see several aphid “mummies” treatment may not be necessary. Also if temperatures increase during this period, aphid populations may not increase. Check your field again to determine if populations are increasing and if treatment is necessary. There are several insecticides labeled for use on soybean aphids. Pyrethroids have a relatively long residual and work best at temperatures below 90^0 F, while organophosphates have a heavy fuming action and may work well in heavy canopies or high temperatures.

If you have questions about soybean aphids or other soybean pests, feel free to contact me at University of Nebraska Extension in Nemaha County in Auburn at 1824 ‘N’ St at the courthouse (402) 274-4755.

Gary Lesoing
Extension Educator
Nemaha County
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