

April 29, 2016

EARLY BIRD GETS THE WORM

When it comes to soybean planting and spraying fungicide to prevent wheat foliar diseases, the early bird gets the worm. Let me explain further.

Wheat – is now a minor crop for us now in Saline County but still an outstanding rotational and conservation crop. The winter wheat crop, after the recent rains, looks a lot better and showing promise. Last year the disease triangle lined up perfectly and nailed our wheat crop. Susceptible host, favorable weather and inoculum present are the 3 corners of the triangle and when this aligns perfectly, it causes us issues. Each year can be different, but last year a stripe rust outbreak and fusarium head scab outbreak caused us major issues. Farmers are forced to make a decision whether a fungicide will pay on wheat before a disease outbreak occurs in their fields. Will the triangle line up again in back to back years?

We can obtain excellent control for up to 28 days for stripe rust, powdery mildew, and fungal leaf spot diseases by applying a broad spectrum fungicide. The optimal timing for fungicide application on winter wheat is 50 to 100% flag leaf emergence which will be coming soon. The crop has already jointed, usually a week later a second joint, then flag leaf emergence will occur about a week after the second joint appears. Unless it really cools down, flag leaf emergence will be the first part of May this year. With \$4.00 wheat it will take a 5 to 6 bushel response to pay for a broad spectrum fungicide application.

One change that has occurred is with generics. Generic foliar fungicide on wheat is rated excellent if you are only treating for stripe rust. This is something to keep in mind if stripe rust would break out early in your field before flag leaf emergence. Most will treat at flag leaf time with a broad spectrum fungicide if that is the decision.

Soybeans – Our weather during the growing season (sunlight, temperature, and rainfall) will ultimately determine the soybean yield potential in a given year. While it is difficult to predict the weather ahead, farmers usually have an opportunity to manage their planting date to increase the odds of achieving a higher yield this year. Quite a few soybeans have already been planted in April and then we were rained out of the fields.

Early soybean planting helps build a canopy that harvests most of the available sunlight, especially during crop stages, that are crucial for yield formation. Canopy closure by the time soybean begins to set pods (the R3 stage) should be the “holy grail” for soybean producers. Early planting will also ensure that pod setting and seed filling occurs under high sunlight levels and that the crop will make use of most of the crop season length to grow, leading to a higher number of nodes and seed number, and a longer seed-filling period.

We want our soybean fields to look “green to the eye” by early July, because this is the calendar time that coincides with R3 stage for late April or early May plantings in Nebraska in most of the years. In addition to increasing light harvest, early planting helps maximize the fraction of available soil water used by the crop for transpiration relative to the amount of water that evaporates directly from the soil surface.



An excellent article on the subject can be found in our CropWatch newsletter this week. Go to: <http://ow.ly/4na4gb> The bottom line is soybeans can be planted during the last week of April and first week of May in central and eastern Nebraska with relatively low risk of spring frost. We will see how May lines up with our weather. If it stays wet in May the early birds should get the worm.

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