

Freeze damage to wheat - what to look for

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. This is a tough time of year for trying to determine if there was frost damage to the wheat crop. There are so many factors that go into how and when damage occurs. It depends on the stage of growth of the wheat plant. Was it calm or windy, cloudy or clear. How cold did it get and for how long. Was it no-till or conventional till? How thick was the stand, even how heavily fertilized a field was can impact the amount of damage. I can pretty much guarantee that there has been some damage in some spots in some fields. The further developed any wheat stem is the more likely it is to be damaged and that damage will occur at a higher temperature. Those tillers that were later and still hadn't pushed a head up out of the crown are going to be fine. In fact, most years, every wheat plant produces a bunch of tillers that never fully develop. In a year like this when some of the primary tillers are damaged, those secondary tillers will come on and produce a head and wheat. Obviously, the primary tillers are going to have the biggest head and the best yield advantage, but when these are damaged, the secondary tillers can come along and often make up nearly 99% of the lost yield. For the tillers that are jointing, the critical temperature can be as high as 28 degrees or as low as 22. When you check fields look for yellowing leaves, a silage smell, water soaked stems. If you peel open the stem to the tiny head, it should have a crisp whitish green look. If it is white and limp, it's probably toast. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Does the cold impact alfalfa weevil?

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. So did all of that cold weather we have impact the alfalfa weevil? More than likely not. It may have damaged the alfalfa a little but all the cold did was slow the weevils down and make them not eat as much. But warmer weather is coming and those weevils are going to make up for lost time. The only time that I can remember cold weather making an impact on the alfalfa weevil was in April 2007 when we had the Easter weekend freeze that killed the alfalfa back to the ground. In that case, the weevil larvae died not because of the cold, but because of starvation! Well, in 2007 it got down to 20 degrees and froze everything hard. I don't think anywhere right around here got that cold but 26 to 28 degrees for a couple of hours will probably frost some leaves and tips. In general if we have a couple hours of 25 to 27 degree temperatures we will see damage to new spring growth on alfalfa. The best thing to do, if you think you had a little freeze damage, is absolutely nothing. The leaves that weren't damage will continue to produce food for the rest of the plant and it should outgrow any freeze damage. What I'm far more concerned about though, is getting 4 or 5 days in a row with temperatures in the 60s and 70s as we will see rapid growth by the alfalfa weevils. We need to get ready to spray and then start checking daily. When you start seeing one weevil larvae per stem, get the sprayers rolling, but make sure it's above 60 degrees for several hours before you spray to get the larvae up and active and then apply at least 15 gallons per acre of carrier and 20 gallons would be better! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck

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Cool Weather and Rain Impact on Pastures

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. What a crazy spring! What a change from a year ago. It just goes to prove that when you live in the middle of a continent, average weather really is made up of extremes. The good news is that we got some decent rain last week and unlike last summer when day after day showed no chance for rain, we are at least getting chances of rain in the forecast. So, as we move closer to the first of May and we are getting ready to put cattle out on pastures, we are also faced with the fact that because of the cool weather we just don't have much new growth out there for the cattle to feed on. If you normally take cattle to pasture on May 1st, this may be the year you wait an extra week or two. The forecast does look like it's starting to warm up and with the rainfall we've been getting I'm expecting some good early growth once it get's started. So what about stocking rates? With this rain is it okay to return to normal stocking rates? I'm not comfortable with that. Even if we do get normal rain through the summer, whatever that is, the pastures were still stressed last year and going a little bit easier on them this year is going to be important to help them recover. So what do I recommend this year for stocking rates? I'd like 10 - 12 acres per cow calf pair, but if I can get you to back off to 8.5 to 9 acres per pair that'd even make me happy. Remember, a 1200 pound cow and spring calf is going to require 1 1/3 acres of good Flint Hills pasture per month. With the condition that many of those pastures are in, you may want to think 2 acres to be on the safe side. Start doing the math and see what you get. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck

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