

Current crop production issues

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. This is the time of year when I get to spend a lot of time out in crop fields checking problems and scouting for problems. While I don't like to find problems, being out in fields does put me in my happy zone! A lot of things are popping up though that you need to be aware of. If you have your first cutting of alfalfa off and the field is not greening up or greening up unevenly then you probably are dealing with adult alfalfa weevils that are hanging out in fields and eating off the regrowth as it comes up. If the temperature was in the 90s every day the weevils would move to the timber for the rest of the summer. But it isn't looking that way so an insecticide treatment is probably be in order. I looked at a lot of wheat last week and I think we dodged another bullet with those frosts on the 16th and 17th. I'm not saying that there wasn't ANY damage, but the heads that I was looking at in the field I visited were showing good kernel set and development. That is as long as there's still moisture for the plants! I was looking at some corn fields that appeared uneven, but not from frost damage. I was finding wireworm damage which was kind of surprising given that all corn hybrids today have insecticidal seed treatments. These must have been earlier planted corn where the seed treatment had worn out. There was less than 5% dead plants but quite a few injured plants. In most cases, even though they were stunted and injured, there was good root development and I expect the corn to be fine! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Cheat control

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. As I was out scouting fields and looking for possible wheat frost damage, I noticed a lot of wheat fields with a fair amount of cheat. When I say cheat I'm including any of those winter annual bromes including true cheat, downy brome or Japanese brome. There are some newer products on the market that will give partial control or at least suppression of these weedy grasses, but I'd really like to think that we can get out of this without herbicides. Ultimately, simply taking the field out of wheat for two years will get 99% of that cheat under control. Cheat seed is thin, light and papery. It doesn't live very long under field conditions. 95% of it will sprout the first fall following production and after 2 years out of wheat 99.99% of the cheat seed will be gone. Someone once asked me how to control cheat and I said go to soybeans. He planted double crop beans following the wheat harvest and went right back to wheat that fall. That is NOT going to break the seed production cycle. You need to NOT grow wheat for 2 years. One year will help a lot, but two years is better. Burning off wheat stubble doesn't help, contrary to what you might hear. Plowing may help for one year, but you get right back into the whole problem soon enough. You need to break that seed production cycle by planting corn, soybeans or sorghum and then controlling the cheat in the spring, pre-plant to your spring planted crop. Then again the next year. Once you break the cycle for 2 years you'll find that not only do you have a lot less cheat, you have less buckwheat, less bindweed, less mustard, well, you get it. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Harvesting short wheat

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. It's probably been 25 years since we've had a wheat crop that is as short as it is this year. The crop of 1989 was worse than this year and it was shorter. Cutting a wheat crop that may only be 15 inches tall, maybe less in places, is different than more normal years, whatever that means. In short wheat, getting heads into the combine with less straw will be a challenge. In some cases the reel may not be able to effectively convey the wheat back from the cutter bar to the auger nor hold it in place during cutting. Shorter wheat also means more contact potential with the ground, especially on our upland terraced fields. Stripper headers may be the least impacted by the short wheat, but since few people have those, let's talk about conventional headers. Adjust the reel to get the best movement of the heads from the cutter bar to the auger. Combining in slightly wetter conditions may help prevent shatter and decrease losses. Make sure that sickles and guards are in good condition as there is not as much crop material to push and ensure cutting by worn sickles. Lower yields and uneven crop flow may also require performing combine adjustments to the concave/rotor cage clearance, cylinder/rotor speed and fan speed. The leading cause of grain damage under almost any harvesting condition is overly fast cylinder or rotor speed. This will be especially true in short wheat as there is less material in the concave or rotor cage to thresh against. This year it'll be more important than normal to spend a little extra time at the beginning checking in the bin and behind the combine. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.