

Early Season Corn Issues

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Receiving normal or above normal May rainfall in the first half of the month was somewhat unexpected. And while it's making a challenge to get alfalfa or brome cut and baled, boy is the corn ever looking good. Most of the corn that was planted by May 4th is up and growing - in fact it's growing quite quickly right now. While most of the corn I've seen is looking good at the 55 mph windshield survey, there's probably going to be some issues. First of all a head's up - if you had corn just coming up and one of these heavy rains inundated it, even for a short period of time, like a day or two, there's a strong probability that you will see some weird disease issues later on in the summer. Nothing we can do about it - it just happens. With some of the excessively wet weather the past couple of weeks, we may very well be looking at excessive nitrogen loss which will result in pale green plants and reduced yield. Tissue sampling and testing may be in order in the coming weeks. There's a whole host of insect issues we could be looking at this time of year as well. Black Cutworms are active right now - small ones will cause window pane feeding, larger ones will cut off plants at the base. White grubs, wire worms and flea beetles may also be active as well. If you are seeing some strange things going on in your field, please give me a call so I can come out and check on it with you. You may also see some strange damage showing up from herbicide use because of the wet weather. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Why was early season plant growth so poor?

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I've been talking to a lot of producers about their brome grass when I've been out looking at stripe rust in wheat. In case you haven't noticed it, the brome crop is pretty short - it is short in stature which also means we aren't going to have a lot of bales. The biggest reason is lack of rain and winter moisture, and a contributing reason is lack of timely fertilization. Once the brome grass starts to head out, you might as well bite the bullet and cut it. You aren't going to get that much more tonnage by waiting. All you're going to do is lose quality. Keep in mind that we were way below normal with precipitation from July of last year until the past two weeks. In that period we had all of 2 months that had normal or above normal precipitation. From July 1 2014 through May 1, 2015 we were 8 inches below normal precipitation. We should have had 23 inches of precipitation and we had 15. That isn't a good situation to be in. If your fertilizer application on your brome didn't occur until after February 1st it didn't really get into the root zone until sometime in April. That is far too late to do any good. For the past several years I've been advocating fertilizer applications in November and early December just for this very reason. You can fertilize your brome, but until rainfall of at least one half inch in one occurrence carries that fertilizer into the root zone, it doesn't do any good. By fertilizing in the late fall, you have a better chance of getting those nutrients into the soil, to the roots and into the plant to be utilized when it starts growing in late February or early March!

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What's up with the alfalfa?

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I had a lot of calls late last week about the alfalfa crop. What's going on with it and what to do about it. If you haven't noticed, a lot of alfalfa fields appeared to be going backwards the past 10 to 14 days. We've got a combination of factors at work here. First of all was the dry weather. Up until about two weeks ago we did not have good soil moisture. A lot of the alfalfa had effectively just stopped growing. It wasn't blooming, it wasn't growing, it wasn't doing anything. This stress plus the mild weather conditions, made it very inviting for insect pests, mainly adult alfalfa weevils, to stick around and continue feeding. Adult alfalfa weevils, the little brown bug with a black stripe down it's back, normally moves out of alfalfa fields and in to the timber to spend the summer. But they don't start moving out until we have several days of good warm weather - as in up into the 80s for several days. In the absence of that they will just stay in the fields and keep feeding. When we have drought stressed alfalfa, and then it starts raining, like we've seen, the alfalfa normally doesn't put much growth on the existing stems. It may initiate blooming, like we are seeing, but most of its efforts go in to putting up new growth. Most alfalfa fields need to be cut to remove whatever growth is there so new growth can come on. But we need to watch those fields after cutting to make sure that adult weevils aren't out there feeding on that new growth. If we find that this is what's happening we will need to spray that stubble to protect the new growth coming on. Call me if you need me to look at your fields! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC,

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