

Fall Insect Update - Aphids and Armyworms

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. While harvest is moving right along we still need to be talking about insect pests. The good news is that the white sugarcane aphids are really slowing down and beneficial insect populations are exploding right now. I was in a sorghum field yesterday and have never seen so many lacewings in my life. The other thing that we've been finding out is that once the aphid numbers have wound down the sticky honeydew really dries up to nothing pretty quickly so I don't think we'll be dealing with many harvest issues this far north! What I am a little worried about are armyworms and army cutworms. I was looking at a cover crop in a wheat stubble field recently that had been hammered by armyworms. So if they are around in cover crops there is a risk of them being in emerging wheat fields where they could do some major damage. Now, armyworms and fall armyworms are pretty well going to be shut down by the first hard freeze, whenever that might be. But until then they'll continue to feed. Army cutworms will not be shut down by freeze and can be active anytime this fall, winter or next spring when the temperatures are above 45 degree. Keep an eye on your new wheat crop. The first thing to look for is not disappearing wheat, but window pane feeding. Small holes or transparent areas on the leaves. If you start to see this or plants disappearing, give me a call so we can take the time to determine which insect is doing the damage and what treatment, if any we need! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Wheat Fertilization rate

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I know you are trying to finish corn harvest as well as get wheat planted, but we need to start thinking about nitrogen fertilization rates and application dates on wheat already. The new wheat genetics have a tremendous amount of yield potential. They have a big engine, you might say. Ultimately the final yield is going to depend on weather, rainfall, disease and insect pressure - things that we have a limited amount of ability to influence. But the one thing we can have an impact on is how much fuel that engine has. Fuel meaning nutrients, specifically nitrogen. I can never emphasize enough the need to do profile nutrient testing. Most years I'd say that it is very important. But after the year that we've had, most fields aren't going to have much residual nitrogen left. So I punched in a range of yields into our fertility recommendation program and came out with about the levels of fertilization that I expected. If you are shooting for 70 bushel wheat, you're looking at about 1.7 pounds of nitrogen per bushel. I think that this is a good starting point for most producers. That equates to 120 pounds of total nitrogen per acre. If you want to shoot higher, start figuring about 1.85 to 1.9 pounds of N per bushel. As for timing, I feel you have to have it down by February 1st and there is no reason you can't apply it in late November or December as long as the ground isn't frozen. As the ground cools, loss to denitrification goes away so it is unlikely you'll lose very much. And by putting it in pre-Christmas, you've got more opportunity to get moisture to take it in the ground! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Is the sorghum going to mature before a freeze?

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Since we aren't growing as much sorghum as we used to, I'm not getting this question as often as I used to. But invariably, about now, I'll get a phone call or two with a concerned producer wondering if his sorghum is going to mature before a freeze. As if we can do anything about it anyway. The time to think about that is when you are choosing your hybrids and maturity dates in the winter AND when you decide to plant it. We've got producers pushing the envelope every year anyway and then we get a year with delayed planting and no adjustment in maturity, you run that risk. Okay, enough preaching for now. The good news is that September was well above normal with temperatures so we gained a lot of growing degree days then. We've had some pretty good days already this month including this week. When things start to get critical is when temperatures get below 40 degrees. Even though it may not be freezing, sorghum just doesn't grow then. Remember, it's a tropical plant, a warm weather grass and it really likes highs in the 90s and lows in the 70s. If your sorghum is still green with no color development yet, you've got a problem and there's nothing you can do. If you've got good color development and the kernels are getting good and hard you should be in good shape. In between and you may have the luxury of harvesting some light weight grain sorghum. The good news is that while the elevator may not want freeze damaged sorghum, it can still make pretty good livestock feed, or you still have the option of cutting the field for silage. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.