Ag Radio Programs for May 14 - 20, 2018

Wheat Outlook

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. By the middle of last week there were a lot of wheat fields headed out and quite a few more getting ready to head out. Flowering normally begins 3 to 5 days after full head emergence which means some fields are now flowering. An entire head does not flower all at once. It starts at the top of the head and proceeds down. It may take 7 to 10 days for all the flowers on a wheat head to pollinate. This is a crucial time for the wheat crop. Temperatures over 80 degrees and especially over 90 degrees are not a good thing for wheat. That coupled with lack of adequate soil moisture could cause kernels to simply abort. As heat or drought stress progresses the plant will abort more and more kernels in an effort to try to get at least a few kernels to fully develop. It's a self preservation thing for a plant to make sure it passes it's genes on to another generation. I have seen very few fields that I feel justify fungicide treatments. In fact some fields are just about past the point of being able to be sprayed due to label restrictions from stage of growth or pre-harvest waiting intervals. I have seen zero rust in Geary County this spring. Given the dry weather that's not a surprise, but the same situation has been seen across much of the state. BUT, there are scattered fields that have the yield potential to benefit from a fungicide treatment, although the risk threat just isn't there yet. If you aren't sure if you should be spraying or not, give me a call and I'll come out and take a look at your field! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Soybean Seed Treatment

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 phone call from a producer the other day wanting my thoughts on fungicidal and insecticidal seed treatments on soybeans. As you can imagine, it all depends. I have to say that even the entomologists can't seem to find consistent adequate response to insecticidal seed treatments to justify them. It may change some year, but for now that's all I'm going say on that. Fungicidal seed treatments can be a big benefit to soybeans, but again, it all depends. With soybeans we are primarily looking at preventing damping off diseases that kill or damage soybean seedlings as they get established. These problems are going to be the worst in early planted fields going into no till and especially in cold wet soils. The longer it takes for that seed to germinate and the seedling to get above ground, the more risk there is in seedling diseases. As of late last week minimum overnight soil temperatures were in the upper 60s and daytime high soil temperatures were in the mid to upper 70s. Soybeans are going to come up fast under those conditions. If you have a wet no till field with a lot of residue, you may see some benefit to fungicidal seed treatments. If you have conventional tilled fields, I highly doubt that you are going to see any benefit to those seed treatments this year, and let me be very clear that this is for this year only. If all your seed is treated, not a problem. I don't think we'll have much pressure this year, but you're ready. If you have untreated seed plant it and don't worry! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Brome Hay Decisions

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. While I've been out scouting alfalfa and wheat fields I've also been looking at a few brome fields. They are showing the same impacts of the drought and now heat that the wheat is. I've seen bromegrass that is 6 inches tall and heading out. I've seen bromegrass that was fertilized obviously late and the only place it is having an impact is where water has collected enough that it provided adequate moisture to carry the fertilizer into the soil. Reason number one why I think we need to be fertilizing our bromegrass back in November, maybe even October before wheat planting! But that's a topic for next September. Right now the question becomes what do we do with our bromegrass this year. Do we cut it for hay or just let it go. I won't try to sugarcoat it one little bit - unless something changes real fast, we won't have much of a bromegrass hay crop this year. We probably won't have much of an alfalfa second cutting either if it doesn't start raining. If you cut for hay, keep in mind that we really need to be leaving a minimum of 4 inch tall stubble for the protection of the grass plant. Which means in some fields there's not going to be enough hay to make a windrow. You can wait for it to head out and maybe get a little more tonnage, but the quality isn't going to be very great. Waterways will likely have more hay than brome meadows, but not by much. I really think a lot of these brome fields just need to be let go and if necessary, use them for emergency grazing later on, if needed. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Soybean Inoculation

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. A couple of days ago we were talking about fungicidal seed treatments on soybeans, but what about inoculants for our soybeans? For years and years and years, okay, decades, I've preached about inoculating. What do I always say? It's cheap insurance. Usually it's going to cost just a few dollars per acre. When you are planting soybeans into a field that has never had soybeans, you need to use inoculant as there's no guarantee that the needed bacteria or out there. Under these conditions you can almost always guarantee a yield response. A seed applied inoculant will usually give you more of a yield response but a seedbox inoculant is better than nothing at all and the yield increase often more than pays for the cost IF there had never been soybeans grown there. But what about those fields where you have soybeans in a rotation and you've got soybeans planted at least once every 2 or 3 years? Under those conditions you probably won't see any response. There's basically about five situations that I would make sure to use inoculant. If soybeans haven't been in the field in the past 4 or 5 years, if the soil pH is below 6 regardless of past cropping history, soil has a high sand content, field has been flooded for more than a week since the last soybean crop was planted or, early season stress conditions which will impact plant-bacteria establishment. This one could be important this year but if you can answer yes to any one of those conditions then it would be good to inoculate! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Footprints in the field

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 wonderful conversation in my office with a retired extension specialist last week. As my conversations often do with this man, they went meandering into all sorts of topics. In the process Gus brought up a phrase I had forgotten about - not the concept, but the phrase and it goes like this. "The most important fertilizer a person can apply to their field, is their footprints." Farms are getting larger. We seem to be relying more and more on technology and monitors and all sorts of stuff to tell us what's going on in the field. But none of this can take the place of spending time getting to know your own fields. Even if you've farmed a field for 50 years, every year is different and nothing can take the place of being IN the field looking at the crops, looking at the soil, looking for problems. As an agronomist I enjoy nothing better than walking a field. The simple exercise of getting down on my hands and knees to scout for insect or disease pests is second to none. Dirty grass stained knees are the signs of someone who's been out getting to know and understand their crops. It doesn't matter whether you're a county agent or a farmer, if you can see a problem from your vehicle going down the road at 55 mph, then it's probably too late to do anything about it. Early season weed pressure? Get out and check. Wheat leaf diseases? Walk through a field in the morning. Insect issues? Well, you can see the theme here. Technology can help you, but to really understand your fields, means footprints. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.