Wheat Freeze Issues

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. Since the first of April we have had 3 mornings with below freezing temperatures and possibly more to come. The April 3rd and 4th events got fairly cold for several hours. Fortunately I think we dodged any serious damage because while jointing had started in many fields most heads were still fairly low to the ground and somewhat protected by the existing foliage. We will likely see a few deformed heads in the earliest tillers once they start heading out but low levels of damage at that time are easily overcome by secondary tillers. That event, however, was followed by 3 days of temperatures above 70 degrees and then more frosty weather and we may have an evening or two to go yet. The old timers always said you have to lose a wheat crop 6 or 7 times before harvest so maybe this year is just proving that old tail correct. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Alfalfa Insect Update

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. This up and down weather has made it a challenge to keep up with insect issues in alfalfa. Weevil populations, for the most part, have been moderate but I've had several calls from growers about aphids, lots of aphids in their alfalfa. The aphid populations really exploded on those three warm days last week. The cooler weather of late has slowed down everything including weevil, aphids and alfalfa growth. Most of what we are seeing is pea aphids. We usually don't worry about pea aphids because our weevil treatments control them. I'm also hesitant to be in a hurry to spray aphids as beneficials can often take care of them. With that said, do keep monitoring. Freezing weather slows pea aphids but doesn't kill them. 10 inch tall alfalfa will need treatment when you have 50 aphids per stem field wide. Smaller alfalfa is less. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Yellow Wheat?

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. I've had several wheat producers asking about yellowish looking wheat. This time of year yellow wheat can be any number of culprits. Spindle Streak and Soil Borne Mosaics both can give a yellow apearance but it's usually a mottled yellow look when you get right up on it. If you fertilized well and had rain to move the nitrogen into the soil then yellow fields shouldn't be nitrogen related. If you applied late as in after mid March, the N may not be down to the roots yet. The one thing that we are starting to see more of is sulfur deficiency. One quick check is that nitrogen deficiency shows first in older leaves while sulfur deficiency usually shows first in the younger leaves. If you suspect that sulfur deficiency is the culprit you can try to get 20 or 30 pounds applied yet now, but let's definitely soil test in the near future! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Starter Fertilizers

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. With recent cool conditions pulling soil temperatures back down, starter or popup fertilizer applications at corn planting time can certainly be beneficial even in higher P and K testing soils. Where the starter fertilizer is applied can be important. Broadcasting starter generally isn't effective so we are looking at in furrow placement, 2 x 2 placement or a surface dribble. In furrow requires great caution so that N plus K20 rates are not in excess of 8 pounds per acre in 30 inch rows. 2 x 2 and surface dribble, just to the side of the row, are much safer and allow much higher rates of nitrogen. In fact, using surface dribble or 2 x 2 you can apply nearly the entire nitrogen for the season with little worry of impacting stand. It will take a little longer at planting time, but the benefits can really be worth it! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.

Drought Tolerant Corn Hybrids

This is Ag Outlook, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. In recent years quite a few seed companies have been rolling out DT or Drought Tolerant hybrids which then poses the question of whether this is marketing hype or do they make a difference? K-State has spent a lot of time evaluating DT hybrids against similar maturity non DT hybrids by the same companies. First and foremost, if you are in high yield environments, meaning yield potential of 170 plus, it doesn't matter which you plant. Below those levels, the results have been all over the board. In lower yielding, moisture limiting environments DT hybrids, overall, showed a 3% yield advantage or about 5 bushels per acre with a 5% confidence interval. There were some pretty noticeable trends that showed the DT advantage became more and more apparent the lower the yield dropped. Are they worth it? Your call! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Ag Outlook.