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Field Evaluations

With the push to complete planting, get some hay put up, and prep for wheat harvest, it's been a little difficult to stay on top of much field scouting. What's going on out there?

Disease pressure in corn is starting to ramp up. Some of it deserves attention – Goss' Wilt and Gray Leaf Spot will likely be showing up soon since other states are already reporting them. A knowledge of the symptomology of these diseases and control recommendations is important when making a decision on the need for economics of applying a fungicide.

Nutrient deficiencies in corn are also rearing their ugly heads with both Potassium and Nitrogen deficiency symptoms present right now. That said, are you really deficient in these nutrients or are field conditions to blame? As busy as it is, before a decision is made about trying to correct, a few plants may need some evaluation to see just what's going on. Compromised root systems, sidewall compaction, and lack of soil oxygen can all contribute to nutrient deficiencies – that won't be corrected simply by applying more nutrient.

If you're a wheat grower, scout fields for the level of Fusarium Head Blight (FHB) incidence. FHB, or scab, is highly prevalent in the Meadowlark Extension District Wheat Variety Plot at Sabetha and likely in varying levels in other areas as well. Reports from the eastern two thirds of the state are indicating huge differences in damage levels based on variety.

A good shovel and a little time will help explain a lot of what's going on in the field. Might not be a bad idea to dig up a few plants when you're out checking field dryness or weed pressure. At the very least, it might give a good heads up of what may be to come!

Squash Bugs

Squash bugs have arrived! According to KSU Horticulture Specialist Dr. Ward Upham, the first nymphs of the season's first generation are alive and well. These nymphs will eventually become adults that will lay eggs that will become the second generation. Why do we care about the second generation? Because they tend to be the large and damaging generation that sucks the life out of our plants, killing them before we have a chance to harvest anything!

With that in mind, if you planted squash or pumpkins to actually harvest anything, we need to get on top of control as soon as possible. Once they reach the grey, shield shaped adult stage, they are almost impossible to control.

Insecticides must directly contact the insect for them to work. For best results, use a general use insecticides containing active ingredients such as permethrin, malathion, or methoxychlor. Any of these products can provide good control if direct application is made to young, soft-bodied squash bugs. Direct application means you MUST get the spray or dust on the underside of the leaves since this is where the insects live.

Always follow label guidelines for use rates, crop, and pre-harvest intervals.