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meadowlark extension district agent news

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Give Cool-Season Turf Grasses a Boost

For most homeowners, a good fertilization in spring is what we think our fescue and bluegrass turf grass stands really need. It can sure help, but if you could only fertilize your cool-season grasses once per year, September would actually be the best time to do it.

September is when days shorten and temperatures, particularly nighttime temperatures, moderate. That means time for cool season turf grasses to start their natural thickening process by a process known as tillering - forming new shoots at the base of existing plants (or in the case of bluegrass, spreading by underground stems called rhizomes). That's what makes a September fertilization the most important one!

For most situations, apply a pound to a pound and a half of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet (the settings recommended on lawn fertilizer bags usually result in about one pound). Try to use a quick release source during this time frame. Most fertilizers sold in stores are quick release unless they specifically say they are intended for summer use.

Fall fertilization may be a change of mindset for some, but to help thicken your turf stands, it's the most important season for fertilizer application. In fact, the second most important fertilization timing for cool-season grasses also occurs in the fall - in November! One pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet in November will help the grass green up earlier next spring and provide the nutrients needed until summer. If you thought your 2017 lawn care program wasn't going to start until a fertilizer application next spring - think again!

Foliage Feeding on Soybeans

Green cloverworm larvae feeding has really become noticeable across northeast Kansas during the last couple of weeks. Feeding on the underside of leaves has become holes in the leaves to a point that damage is visible in many fields from the road!

In some cases, feeding has reached an economic threshold requiring a fungicide application to prevent further damage. This is generally the case when densities reach 10

-12 larvae/ row ft. with about 30% defoliation, and larvae are still small (1/2 inch or less).

In addition to insecticides (which are very effective when proper coverage is achieved) there is also an entomopathogenic fungus that can help with control by rapidly cutting down the population. It typically kicks in about the time the aforementioned densities are attained, and it seems to be doing so again this year. This fungus causes the green cloverworm larvae to stop feeding after 12-24 hours of infection and causes death 24-48 hours later. Sometimes, infected larvae still look alive even in death, which is one of the characteristics of this fungus.

Scouting is still necessary even if economic thresholds for cloverworm aren't reached at this time. There will likely be at least one more generation of green cloverworms and continued scouting is also necessary for adult bean leaf beetles, stink bugs, and podworms (there will likely be one more generation of these insects as well), all of which may feed on pods and/or seeds.

For information on soybean pests please see Soybean Insect Management 2016, available via your District Office or online at <https://www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF743.pdf>