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Root Lesion Nematode – a Corn Pest

If you are one of the fortunate growers with corn planted, I hope it is up and growing well. Before long, it will be scouting time for leaf diseases as well as the potential for nitrogen loss a result of abundant moisture and waterlogged soils. Both can be visible yield robbers.

Not all pests are easily observed. One often *unseen* corn yield robber is called the root-lesion nematode. Present at some level in nearly all corn fields in Kansas, according to KSU Plant Pathologist Dr. Doug Jardine, it often exhibits no specific or identifiable symptoms other than yield loss. While most losses occur in the continuous corn areas of western Kansas, it is becoming an issue to be more aware of in northeast Kansas as well.

Making it even more difficult to detect is the fact that the highest pressure may be limited to patchy areas of the field, requiring thorough scouting to catch. Even then, unless growth appears stunted or yellowing is evident (occasionally, roots may have lesions on them or appear to be pruned), the pest will likely go undetected without some ‘digging’.

If yield maps or other observations have shown areas where yield loss can’t be easily attributed to something else, it might be time to test for root lesion nematode using a whole-root assay. Start by determining when emergence occurred, then look ahead 30-40 days – that’s the optimal time for sampling. Dig up suspect plants, trying to keep some of the soil with the roots. Keep samples cool until they can be shipped via your local Extension Office (submit samples by Wednesdays) or sent directly to the Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab. Sample costs as well as instructions for sampling and submission are available at the KSU Plant Pathology webpage at: <https://www.plantpath.k-state.edu/extension/diagnostic-lab/>. Other plant-parasitic nematodes that can result in losses include the sting, stunt and stubby-root nematodes that can be found by sampling as well. Contact a Meadowlark Extension District Office for local mailing instructions.

Ticks

We’re well in to tick season, I’m afraid. Temperatures are warm. Grass borders are tall. Trees are fully leafed out and the safe haven for tick populations is large. While these wooded or tall grass areas are certainly more prone to tick activity, it’s not uncommon to find them even in mowed areas as well.

Because ticks can transmit several diseases, knowledge of how to manage their populations is important. For example, if a tick is found on you, it should be carefully and safely removed, head intact, before feeding occurs for more than a few minutes, if possible. That can be difficult to make happen at best. That’s why prevention and other habitat modification efforts are a good idea.

For more information on the species of ticks found in Kansas, request a copy of Ticks in Kansas from your local Extension Office or by e-mailing me at dhallaue@ksu.edu. You can also check it out online at: <https://www.vet.k-state.edu/vhc/docs/ticks-in-kansas.pdf>.