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Soybean Emergence Issues – Disease Concerns

If my ‘windshield survey’ is accurate, soybean planting in the Meadowlark Extension District has reached the fifty percent range. With any luck, emergence will quickly follow.

When emergence isn’t quite what we’d hoped for, we often look for diseases. While disease is just one of many issues (crusting, compaction, and flooding all rivaled seedling diseases as the top causes of stand establishment problems in a 2012 certified crop adviser survey), it definitely has to be considered when a stand isn’t up to par.

In Kansas, we typically deal with four different seedling diseases: Pythium, Phytophthora, Fusarium, and Rhizoctonia. Pythium and Phytophthora like flooded soils, with Pythium favoring cool soils and Phytophthora warmer. Kansas Mesonet soil temperatures across northeast Kansas for the week ending May 15th were sitting in the upper 50’s with rain forecast for most of next week. As these temperatures warm, Rhizoctonia will have to be added to the list of diseases considered, and Fusarium seems to be a possibility in a broad range of soil temperature/moisture combinations.

Bottom line: be ready to scout soybean stands for stand loss. Don’t depend fully on seed treatments to carry the load, either. Seed treatment active ingredients differ in what they will guard against as well as the treatment level needed in high disease situations. Seed treatments don’t last forever, with most protecting the seed/seedling for approximately three weeks after planting (depending on product/disease).

For a primer on seedling diseases, check out this resource available from the Crop Protection Network: <https://cropprotectionnetwork.org/resources/publications/seedling-diseases> .

Rabbits in the Garden

Lots of folks enjoy the wildlife around them – until they start feeding in the garden. One early season wildlife ‘pest’ we have every year is rabbits. Fortunately, there are some management actions you can take to reduce the damage they cause.

First, understand what they like. While they feed on lots of young vegetables and flowers, some, like potatoes, tomatoes, corn, squash, and cucumbers are rarely bothered. That doesn’t mean other things won’t get them, but it may not be rabbits.

Second, when planning protection, put your efforts in to barriers that will provide the best effectiveness. Fencing can be quick and effective, but it needs to be at least two feet tall with one inch or less holes. If fencing isn’t something you want to mess with, consider a floating row cover. They can help keep rabbits away while also keeping plants warm in cool weather.

Repellants are available, but are short lived and require frequent reapplication – if they are even labeled for garden crops (*always* read and follow label directions). Live traps can work if you’re willing to relocate caught rabbits – and you can get them to take your bait with easier food sources often available. You might even consider a motion-activated sprinkler that releases a short burst of water when motion is detected. Some will protect up to 1000 square feet. Shooting is another possibility but only when it is safe and legal to do so.

For additional information on rabbits in the garden – and beyond – check out this publication (or request a copy from a District Office) from our KSU Wildlife Damage Control Series: <https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/l858.pdf> .