K-STATE Research and Extension | Meadowlark District

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Soybean Lodging: 2025 Insect Issues

It's not uncommon for us to annually see wilted or lodged plants along field edges. Anything from wind to wildlife to mowing/spraying/etc… equipment could be the culprit. It's when it starts moving out into the field a few rows that we start to get concerned and this is one of those years when those 'underperforming' plants deserve a second look. Damage from Dectes Stem Borer and Soybean Gall Midge have both been confirmed this summer, most notably in areas closer to the Nebraska border.

Dectes isn't a new pest, having been in soybeans since the 1960s and in sunflowers before that. Adult females chew holes on the underside of a leaf petiole where eggs are laid and larvae hatch. As they grow, larvae tunnel into the main stalk feeding on the pith/central core of the plant. Girdling occurs as the larvae prepare for overwintering and the combination of boring plus girdling results in the potential for collapsed plants and lodging (yield loss estimates are difficult to nail down – and inconsistent from year to year). Insecticidal control is not considered feasible due to the extended period of adult emergence making timing of an insecticide difficult as well as the protection provided by the plant from larvae feeding on the inside of the stem.

Soybean Gall Midge is a newer pest. Previously confined to western Iowa and eastern Nebraska, it was first confirmed in Kansas in 2023. Soybean gall midge larvae overwinter in the soil, emerging in early spring as adults that lay eggs in wounds or natural openings on the lower stems/base of soybean plants. Larvae feed until plant maturity, then fall off the plant and into the soil to restart the cycle. Before they do so, larvae feed on the base and lower stem of the plant, compromising water/nutrient movement. Difficult to detect early, symptoms include dark, discolored areas that spread from feeding sites. Stems become withered, weak, and can eventually break at the base. There are currently no recommended management practices for soybean gall midge. Studies on seed and foliar insecticides have not proven effective.

Neither pest affords much opportunity to prevent their damage, but scouting is encouraged to reduce surprises at harvest. Often limited to field borders, Soybean Gall Midge has resulted in damage to larger field areas in Nebraska. While slow moving and thus far limited to counties nearest the Nebraska line, damage has moved slowly south over the last two seasons with multiple fields along and south of Highway 36 confirmed for the pest.

For additional information, visit the Meadowlark Extension District Agronomy blog (https://blogs.k-state.edu/meadowlarkagronomy/), any District Office or dhallaue@ksu.edu .