KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension
Meadowlark District

May 22, 2026

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Corn Crown Rot

While we tend to see it only sporadically, crown rot has long been a corn production challenge. That's partly because we may not notice it right away and partly because the reason it shows up can be difficult to pinpoint, even as losses can be real.

Most commonly associated with one of naturally occurring Fusarium fungi found in soil and crop residue (Rhizoctonia and Pythium are potential causal agents as well), crown rot is often associated with early season stressors. Those stressors have been difficult to pinpoint, but have included cool and/or wet conditions early in the season or in combination with other issue like wet soils, compaction, etc… Even so, the disease has been seen under various conditions, and it is still unknown what predisposes a plant to infection or subsequent disease development.

Often going unnoticed until later in the season, we occasionally see crown rot symptoms in the early vegetative stages: stunted, wilted plants that may exhibit yellowed lower leaves. When dug up, plants may show a brown to black discoloration of roots and if split, crown tissue may be discolored or dark brown. The more common end of season symptoms include early drydown or plant death with 'ghost plants' sometimes described as grayish-green and surrounded by healthy plants. Once plants have dried down, symptoms include pith discoloration to the first node or roots or roots/brace roots with a pink/reddish color.

Losses are difficult to quantify due to our inability to distinguish crown rot losses from other issues. Work continues to determine whether the Fusarium stalk rot we see later in the season is related and other issues can show similar symptomology – if we see symptoms at all. Seed treatments have not yet shown reductions in problems versus non-treated controls and in some cases may have outlived their typical 'coverage life' when potential infections are starting. Hybrids vary in resistance with ratings often mixed. Early vegetative-stage foliar fungicide research has not thus far shown consistently reduced crown rot incidence/severity compared to non-treated controls.

Whether we see crown rot this season is anyone's guess, but in previous years, wet springs followed by extended dry periods that added additional stress to injured plants was when issues appeared. Hopefully it won't be an issue at all – but it *is* one to keep an eye on when scouting this year. For more on corn crown rot (including pictures of symptoms), visit: https://cropprotectionnetwork.org/publications/frequently-asked-questions-about-crown-rot-in-corn .

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Ross Mosteller
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Nursing Calf Implanting

Last week we looked at the value of early castration and the return on investment for hormonal implants was mentioned. There has been a wealth of documented research proving that implants are a good practice to incorporate into a production system. There are reasons not to implant, like marketing programs such as natural or organic, but today will focus on implanting the suckling calf. Oklahoma State has an excellent publication titled *"Implants and Their Use in Beef Cattle Production"* to learn more.

The term "implant" refers to a group of products used to increase the rate and efficiency of growth. Implants contain natural or synthetic compounds that produce physiological responses in animals similar to natural hormones. Implants are typically made of compressed powder shaped into a small pellet. The pellet is placed, or implanted, under the skin on the backside of the ear.

Implanting nursing calves is a cost-effective way to increase weaning weight. A 4 to 6% improvement in gain has been reported by implanting nursing calves, according to research from Oklahoma State University. This could translate to an additional 15 to 30 pounds of weaning weight and in today's market's that is a very good return on a few dollars invested in the implant!

Implants can be quickly administered at branding, along with other vaccinations. Keep in mind a few considerations for use. No implants are approved for calves less than 30 to 45 days-of-age. Research indicates that one implant between 2 months-of-age and weaning has little impact on future productive performance of heifers. However, if replacement heifers are selected early, implantation is not recommended. Additionally, bull calves should not be implanted, as it can negatively impact reproductive development.

Calves being implanted should be consuming a high-quality diet to maximize the effect of the implant. Implanting at branding time is convenient, but the typical fall weaning time will extend past the beneficial effects of traditional calf implants. If re-implanting is an option, that is recommended somewhere around two months after initial implant, or there are extended-release products that are a viable option as well.

A common concern is that an implant utilized in the suckling calf can negatively impact post-weaning performance. Multiple studies have provided evidence that a suckling implant does not reduce subsequent feedlot performance, and the weaning weight advantage was maintained at slaughter. This is especially impactful as the whole industry benefits from additional pounds of product.

Proper placement is fundamental to the success of the implant, regardless of brand. Correct implanting technique includes a few considerations. Appropriate restraint of the calf to ensure that the implant is applied correctly and that risk of injury for both animals and people is paramount. Ears should be free of dirt and manure; if needed, scrub them with a disinfectant prior to implanting. Disinfectants should be used between animals to clean the needle.

Not all implants are designed the same. Make sure the correct implant gun is being used for the type of implants being used. Needles must be sharp and secured to the gun. Implants should be placed between the skin and cartilage in the middle third of the back of the ear. After implant is inserted, withdrawing the implant gun should allow the user to see and feel the implant if placed correctly.

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Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

Protect your garden from the wind

Many of us have already started planting our warm season crops. However, Kansas weather has thrown us many curveballs recently, and you may notice that your garden is struggling to stay healthy with high winds and storms. In Kansas, annual wind speeds average between 11 to 14 miles per hour around the state, with stronger, gusting winds regularly occurring. While established plants can often withstand this, vegetable seedlings emerge and new transplants may need additional protection from strong winds. Even plants hardened off before transplanting can be broken, twisted, or snapped off by strong winds.

Since this is often an issue that occurs every spring, you can consider planting a windbreak. During the growing season, winds prevail mostly from the South. Consider placing wind breaks on the South side of plants for the most wind protection. Local wind conditions may vary however, as winds are funneled between or swirl around buildings and other objects in the landscape. So you may need to adjust the placement of your windbreak based on local topography.

Fences and hedgerows can also serve as effective long-term windbreaks, protecting crops from prevailing winds. Temporary windbreaks can also be created using wooden shingles, or large plastic bottles, such as a milk jug or 2-liter soda bottle with both the bottom and top cut off. Push the jug or bottle into the soil far enough so it will not blow away. Use wooden dowels or metal rods to secure objects in windy conditions.

In addition to protecting plants from physical damage, windbreaks can have many other positive benefits on fruit and vegetable plants, including through improved water management, increased yield and quality, and earlier crop maturity. In fact, University of Nebraska research found that melon yields were 70% greater in sheltered fields than fields with no wind protection. They also found bell pepper plants with wind protection produced nearly five times as many flowers per plant in just 30 days after transplanting.

While the extra work of creating wind protection for your garden may seem tedious, in the long run it can improve your harvests and prevent your crops from dying early in the season.

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Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

Men's Health: The Importance of Prevention and Early Detection

June is Men's Health Month—a time to remind yourself or the men in your life about the importance of recommended preventive screenings. According to the Mayo Clinic, men have historically been less likely to seek medical care or attend regular preventive checkups. However, many health conditions can be prevented or effectively treated when detected early.

It's important not to wait until symptoms become serious before seeking care. Early detection can help identify conditions such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and other chronic illnesses when treatment is most effective.

Men over age 50 should have a yearly physical exam. Men younger than 50 should have a physical exam every 3 to 5 years. In addition, consider these important screenings to help maintain your health:

Blood Pressure
High blood pressure often has no noticeable symptoms, yet it significantly increases the risk of heart disease and stroke. Regular screening is essential.

Colorectal Cancer
Screening helps detect precancerous polyps or colorectal cancer early, when treatment is most successful. Screening is recommended starting at age 45.

Diabetes
Men without risk factors should begin routine screening at age 45. Earlier screening may be needed for those with risk factors such as high blood pressure, excess weight, prediabetes, or a family history of diabetes.

Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA)
Medicare covers a one-time screening for those at risk with a doctor's referral. You may be at increased risk if:

- You have a family history of abdominal aortic aneurysm
- You are a man ages 65–75 who has smoked at least 100 cigarettes in your lifetime

Cholesterol
High cholesterol increases the risk of heart disease. Men at average risk should begin screening at age 18 and repeat it every 5 years. Those at higher risk—including men who smoke, are overweight, have diabetes, or are over age 45—may need more frequent testing.

Lung Cancer
The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends annual lung cancer screening for adults ages 50–80 who have a 20 pack-year smoking history, currently smoke, or have quit within the past 15 years.

Men's Health Month is a reminder that many serious health conditions can be prevented or managed when detected early. Taking small, proactive steps today can lead to a longer, healthier life. Encourage the men in your life to prioritize their health and schedule recommended screenings.

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Cindy Williams
District Extension Agent, Food, Nutrition, Health and Safety

Canning on a Portable Burner?

Here's what ALL new Presto and National Canners say in their instructions manuals: "Caution: Do not use pressure canner on an outdoor LP gas burner or gas range over 12,000BTU's"
When contacted, their customer service also does not recommend using any (new or old) model Pressure Canners on LP gas burners over 12,000 BTU's.

The main reason is that the high heat can damage pressure canners, especially the newer and thinner aluminum versions. The damage can range from simple warping to severe warping (where the lid might detach) to fusing of the aluminum canner to the LP stove. In all cases the damage will make the canner non-functional.

The other potential damage results from boiling out the canning water too quickly. If a pressure canner goes dry, it almost certainly will warp. Camp stoves, turkey fryer burners, etc. should not be used for home canning. For more information about food or food preservation, contact your local Meadowlark Extension District Office at Oskaloosa-785-863-2212; Holton-785-364-4125 or Seneca-785-336-2184.