

## **CROP NOTES for April 22, 2009**

Past issues of Crop Notes are posted at:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/winneshiek/info/crops.htm>

### **Iowa State University Extension Information for Northeast Iowa**

*By Brian Lang, ISU Extension Agronomist*

*911 S. Mill Street, Decorah, IA 52101*

*563-382-2949*

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## **WEATHER**

### **Soil Temperatures**

Currently, average soil temperatures are still in the mid-40's in northeast Iowa, although I'm sure they will finally get to 50 F during the weekend. Fifty and increasing is the recommended time to start planting corn, and also time to apply crabgrass control on your lawn. Elwynn Taylor wrote a brief article about soil temperatures, planting and germination of corn and soybeans at:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/CropNews/2009/0420taylor.htm>

Soil temperature readings are available at: <http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/NPKnowledge/>

## **MORE WINTER KILL REPORTS**

### **Alfalfa, Orchardgrass, Ryegrass, Winter Wheat**

Over the last week, there were more reports of significant winter kill of forages and small grains. The greatest damage is on the 'flatter' areas of the fields where either ice sheets formed, or saturated (following a significant snow melt) frozen soils helped cause direct cold injury to plant crowns. Ice sheets usually kill by smothering of the plants causing an accumulation of plant respiration by-products around the plant. Alfalfa tolerates ice sheets for about 7 days. Ice sheets and saturated "frozen" soils with no snow cover can also cause winter injury by direct exposure to cold temperatures. Ice is a very poor insulator. Saturated frozen soils have minimal air space also making it a poor insulator.

Direct cold temperature exposure to alfalfa crowns of 5 to 15 F can cause damage to crown tissue. Extended exposure and/or colder temperatures increase the chance for mortality. Alfalfa crowns may not show discoloration if the freeze injury was relatively recent (last 60 days or so),

as noted in the Howard County report, but if the “white” crown tissue is soft or mushy, rather than not firm, the plant is considered to be dead. Earlier tissue damage will show discoloration, anything from a yellow color with more recent injury to a brown color with earlier injury. Any yellow to brown colored tissue is considered dead, but if the plant still has a white, firm tissue extending vertically along the crown, the plant is still viable. See the following publication for photos of crown injury. <http://learningstore.uwex.edu/pdf/A3620.pdf>

These same reasons appear to be responsible for some winter injury on orchardgrass, perennial ryegrass and winter wheat. These injury reports are spotty, but widespread from Delaware County to Howard County, mostly on lower flat land, and also in heavier wheel track areas. I also have some concern with orchardgrass on north slopes.

How to evaluate alfalfa stands was discussed in the March 18 Crop Notes <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/NR/rdonlyres/229080A5-0FEE-44E7-86C0-C63F2E81654A/97995/CROPNOTESforMarch18.pdf>

## **INSECTS**

### **Common Stalk Borer**

The 5 management options for this pest are listed in the March 18 Crop Notes at: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/NR/rdonlyres/229080A5-0FEE-44E7-86C0-C63F2E81654A/97995/CROPNOTESforMarch18.pdf> It is getting late for Option 1. Other options are available for Common Stalk Borer control later in the season and will be discussed timely in future Crop Notes.

### **Black Cutworm**

There are some initial catches of Black Cutworm in the southern half of Iowa, but nothing significant yet.

### **Alfalfa Weevil**

Southern Iowa is starting to scout for Alfalfa Weevil now. We wait for 250 DD accumulation (base 48 F) before starting to scout in the northern part of the state. That information will be posted at the ICM News <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/CropNews/>. The following article from the ICM News has everything you need to know about scouting for Alfalfa Weevil. <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/CropNews/2009/041709pope.htm>

## **WEEDS**

### **Two recent articles that may be of interest to you were placed on the Iowa State Weed Science Home Page**

“Brush Management for Acreage Owners”

“When to Control Winter Annuals in No-till”

Go to: <http://www.weeds.iastate.edu/Default.htm>

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