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Crop Update

Last week was a phenomenal week for planting. Conditions were as near to perfect as we've seen in several years. Because of good planting conditions corn planting progress went from 10% at the beginning to 70% before the weekend rains. And yes, some soybeans were put in the ground too. My guess is 10% of the soybean acres were planted.

The weekend rains did cool soil temperatures back to the upper 40's or lower 50's. This should not be a huge problem from corn or soybeans. The bigger problem might be the effect of the rain on the soil in the form of crusting. Keep an eye on things and take action before emergence is slowed.

The rain also had an impact on some of the newly seeded waterways, repaired terraces and other conservation structures. Take a look and make plans to fix the damage or reseed as appropriate.

Check Corn Emergence and Consider Rotary Hoeing if Needed

If you got your corn planted early and it has not yet emerged, go out and take a look at how things are going. The next couple of weeks could be trying times for those corn seedlings. Soil temperatures have dropped and the ground is plenty wet right now. If cool, wet soils persist damping off could be problematic. If warm, dry conditions blow in watch out for soil crusting. Soil crusting can hurt emergence and populations if not caught soon enough. A preventative rotary hoeing, if timed right, can increase emergence compared being left under crusted conditions. However, if things warm up and timely rains come, crusting could be a non-issue.

Keep an Eye on Already Planted Soybeans

There are a couple reasons to keep an eye on those soybean acres planted last week. First, Sudden Death Syndrome (SDS) was bad across Iowa in 2007 and those fields are likely coming back to soybeans this year. Second, new research indicated that soybeans are at greater risk of being infected with the SDS pathogen before emergence of the germinated seed. However, symptoms will not be visible until later in the summer.

Because of the two cases above, soybeans planted last week are subject to cooler, wetter conditions with slower germination and emergence. X.B. Yang, ISU plant pathologist, indicates that severe SDS is rare in fields planted after May 15 and more frequent in field planted before the first week of May.

Alfalfa Weevil Scouting

1. Use a sweep net to detect if alfalfa weevils are present. If alfalfa weevils are present, proceed to the next step.
2. Collect 10 stems at 5 or more locations within the alfalfa field.
 - Count the number of larvae.
 - Measure the plant height.
 - Determine the average number of larvae per stem.
 - Determine the economic threshold based on control cost.
 - Decide the course of action.

Get more information on management decisions, scouting tips, and weevil identification from the ICM News article titled [Alfalfa Weevil Hatch is Upon Us](#).

Evaluating Alfalfa Stands YouTube Video

Since last week I have run across a YouTube video talking about evaluating alfalfa stands that was created by Dr. Dan Undersander from the University of Wisconsin. It provides good techniques. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jujW3-FE4zE>

[Questionnaire About NRCS EQIP Funding](#)

The Iowa Learning Farm is working with the Integrated Pest Management Institute and the North Central IPM Center NRCS Working Group to develop and enhance the NRCS' EQIP pest management practices and incentives, and to make the incentives increasingly attractive to Iowa farmers.

Please help us meet our goals by answering the seven questions in [Survey Monkey](#).

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) was reauthorized in the 2002 Farm Bill to provide a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers promoting agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants to install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land.

EQIP offers contracts that provide financial assistance to implement conservation practices. Program practices and activities are carried out according to an EQIP program plan of operations developed in conjunction with the producer that identifies the appropriate conservation practice or measures needed to address the resource concerns. The practices are subject to the NRCS technical standards adapted for local conditions.

EQIP provides payments up to 75 percent of the incurred costs and income foregone of certain conservation practices and activities. Farmers may elect to use a certified Technical Service Provider (TSP) for technical assistance needed for certain eligible activities and services.

(source: USDA NRCS website: www.nrcs.usda.gov/PROGRAMS/EQIP)