

Extension Crop Update

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This newsletter, and previous issues from last year, can be found on-line at:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/plymouth/info/cropupdate.htm>

So, what's with the weather, week 2? What's the soil temperature? Check out this web page for an update: <http://mesonet.agron.iastate.edu/data/agclimate/soil-hilo-out.png>. I believe it is averaging at or above 50 degrees at the 4-inch depth now. It is probably warm enough to plant. However, we know that emergence will likely be slow at these soil temperatures, so conditions for seed establishment should be as beneficial as we can make them to reduce the stress on these slower developing seeds. In other words, I don't think the temperature is the limiting factor now – it is the condition of the soil. We can plant a lot of Iowa's crops in a short time, and it is still relatively early.

Get those seeds off to a good start by doing the planting right. Dig and check at what depth the seed is being placed, what the sidewall looks like, what the bottom of the last tillage pass looks like, do we have smeared zones from working it too wet? Remember, the nodal root system emerges at about 1" deep – how does the soil condition look at that depth after the planter has run through it? Just because the surface is gray doesn't always mean it is fit to go!

Alfalfa Stand Evaluation – It looks like alfalfa is starting to green up OK; but then again, I have not evaluated many fields at this time. My counterpart from NE Iowa, Brian Lang, is reporting significant winter kill in some of the fields that left very little regrowth over the winter – so maybe look at those fields a little closer. He has some very good photos of alfalfa injury to crowns from one half of a field that had good regrowth left behind (healthy crowns), and the other half that left very short regrowth (winter injury to crowns). Take a look at his newsletter from April 8 for a view of this injury he is observing: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/winneshiek/info/crops.htm>

I encourage you to dig a few square foot areas in your fields, count how many crowns are living per square foot, then split and evaluate the color of those crowns. Fields seeded last year should have over 12 crowns, over 8 for hay seeded in 2006, and over 4 for seeding years prior to that. The University of Wisconsin has a good discussion on winter injury at their web site, and they recommend counting stems per square foot once they are growing, preferring over 55 in that area (this is probably a better predictor of production than the crown counts). Spend a little time reading this information if you are a serious alfalfa producer: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/crops/uwforage/StandEvaluationFOF.htm> .

EPC Sets New Limits on Manure for Soybeans – The Environmental Commission of the DNR met on March 12 and voted to limit the amount of manure that can be applied to ground which will be planted to soybeans, if this manure came from facilities that have a manure management plan. Beginning May 14, 2008, the amount of manure applied cannot exceed 100# of total nitrogen applied per acre. This represents about ½ of the previous legal maximum application to soybeans. This commission will vote again on this matter in 5 years.

The impact will likely be minimal because most producers utilize the N applied for a corn crop, not soybeans. In addition, corn acres have been increasing, fertilizer prices make it more valuable, and manure test values seem to be decreasing because of changes in rations fed to livestock. We still recommend that if you are utilizing manure, take credit for what is available. Test your manure before

applying and plan for appropriate use! Also, update your manure plans before the fall of 2008 to reflect changes, if it does indeed impact your operation.

Black Cutworm Moths Update - Over the weekend black cutworm moths were on the move. At a location I monitor near LeMars there were 20 moths captured from April 17 - 21. You may ask why is this important when the corn is not even planted? It takes 300 base 50 degrees F accumulated growing degree days to get from eggs to 4th instar black cutworms. It's the 4th instar that cuts the seedlings. The 1st through 3rd instars feed on leaves. Moths flying now are more likely laying eggs in fields that seem attractive (i.e. suitable weed hosts present). With good weed control programs prior to planting, larvae will be looking for something to feed on about the time corn seedlings are emerging.

Remember that moth flights do NOT indicate the need for control but rather give us an idea of when to start scouting for black cutworm larvae which can ultimately cause economic damage. ISU Extension Entomologist Marlin Rice will release an article to the ICM News webpage (<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/CropNews/>) when scouting dates have been calculated. Also, go to this site to sign up for e-mails on either a weekly basis or as they are released!

What's In That Herbicide Package? Every winter I see "new herbicides" on the market. Often they are marketed as "new" products, although there seem to be relatively few new ingredients coming out on an annual basis. Rather, most of the "new" herbicides are mixes of products that have been out there for a while, it is just that they are now packaged together and given a new name.

How do you really know what is in these products? I struggle with that myself. So, I try to use good references to remind me of what to expect from these products. One reference I use is ISU's "2008 Herbicide Guide for Iowa Corn and Soybean production." It is 15 pages long, has effectiveness rating charts, lists of what is in many of the herbicide package mixes, and descriptions of sites of action and injury symptoms. Find this useful tool here: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/WC94.pdf>.

Thanks for "Subscribing!" For more information contact:

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