

Extension Crop Update

This newsletter, and previous issues from recent years, can be found on-line at:
<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/plymouth/info/cropupdate.htm>

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*Serving Cherokee,
Lyon, O'Brien,
Osceola, Plymouth,
Sioux and Woodbury
Counties in NW Iowa.*

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What's an Adequate Corn Stand? Corn emergence began in earnest this past weekend. I can tell – my phone is ringing a lot more frequently. Some of these fields have very good stands, while others have marginal stands. Get out there and count plants! Do it randomly, across the width of the planter, and in several locations. Remember, 1 row 17'5" long is 1/1000 of an acre for 30" rows; use 14'6" for 36" row spacing; and for 20" spacing use 26'1".

When I am evaluating a stand for replanting, I rely on the research reported in the ISU Extension Publication title "Corn Planting Guide," which you can find here: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1885.pdf>. I carry a copy in the field with me – I encourage you to do that, too. Table 7, found on page 6, looks at the yield expectations with different stand levels planted during different time periods. Figure 1 on page 2 shows the yield curve by date, maybe narrowing the date range listed in Table 7 somewhat. From that information you can see that a May 20 planting date would give about a 92% yield expectation when compared to a full stand planted in late April or early May. You can also see that a 24,000 stand planted in early May would give an expected 94% yield compared to a full stand planted at that time. Of course, large skips would reduce that expectation some, as would very uneven emergence (reduce yield expectations 2% for gaps of 16" to 33"; reduce yield expectation 5% with 4' – 6' gaps).

Our Extension Corn Specialist team, Roger Elmore and Lori Abendroth, have a handy "Replant Checklist" available on their corn web page. It is a good step-by-step piece on this issue. I think I will start carrying this into fields with me, too! Find it here: <http://www.agronext.iastate.edu/corn/production/management/planting/replanting.html>

Black Cutworm Update: Watch emerging corn for black cutworm feeding. The predicted first cutting date is May 23 in our area. See the ISU CROP NEWS web page: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/CropNews/> for the BCW Scouting advisory. ISU entomologists have also revised the treatment thresholds to reflect the higher prices of corn. The complete article is also posted on the CROP NEWS page. I believe the treatment threshold for ¾ inch cutworms remains at the 2-3% of the plants cut; but, if for cutworms are 1 inch long the threshold was lowered from 5% down to a 2-3% stand loss. Farmers who planted corn with the Herculex trait should check their fields to insure that cutworms are being controlled. Control may not be adequate if cutworm pressure is heavy.

I don't recommend pulling the trigger on treatment until cutting occurs or absolute identification of the pest has been done due to the fact that there are many other insects out there that can be confused with cutworms. Over the years I have been in several fields treated for cutworms when none

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have been present.

Alfalfa Management: Last week I discussed the PEAQ method for determining if it is time to cut your alfalfa. See that issue for a longer discussion, or go to the PEAQ web site:

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/crops/peaqest1.htm>. It gives you step by step instructions for estimating the forage quality in the field – based on stage of growth and plant height.

This morning I was in two Plymouth County alfalfa fields again, and the tallest stem height was 18". The stems are in the vegetative stage. **The calculated PEAQ value for these sites would be about 224 today.** Don't forget to measure your own crop – fields do vary! Relative feed value drops an average of 3 – 5 points per day. Alfalfa should be around 150 RFV for milking dairy herds, 120 – 130 for heifers, stocker cattle and lactating beef cattle. Under the best conditions, 15% of the forage dry matter will be lost at harvest. Therefore it is necessary to cut at 165 – 170 RFV to end up with forage at 150 RFV.

Alfalfa weevils are reported at low levels in Iowa – I have heard of no thresholds reached, and have seen very few myself. To scout, you should collect 30 stems, shake them in a white bucket, and see how many per stem are present. Some data from last year on treatment thresholds can be found at this ISU ICM Newsletter article: <http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/icm/2007/4-9/alfalfaweevil.html>. In this article, when alfalfa hay is worth over \$100/ton, it still takes about 2 weevils per stem to justify treatment. I haven't seen anything close, yet – but keep looking!