

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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Prepared by

Joel DeJong,

Extension Field Agronomist

Plymouth County Extension
24 1st St. NW
LeMars, IA 51031
Phone: (712) 546-7835e-mail:
jldejong@iastate.edu

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

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Corn Observations: It seems I spent most of last week trying to count to 30, and not getting there very often. Of course, I was counting corn plants in 1/1000th of an acre. Rotary hoes and rainfall really helped many of these stands, but a few didn't make it to 20 and were replanted. If you have to evaluate a corn stand for replanting, don't forget those two very handy references: "Corn Planting Guide," which you can find here:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1885.pdf>, and the "Replant Checklist" : <http://www.agronext.iastate.edu/corn/production/management/planting/replanting.html>.

This morning I dug up a few corn plants that were in the V-2 (two leaf collars present) stage of growth. Nodal roots were starting to elongate, and the damp soils look as if they were helping these roots form all the way around the root, not only down the furrow. I did see some really impressive sidewall compaction last week. Hopefully, the moisture we received lubricates the sidewalls and prevents issues. This is a good time to start digging a few roots to see what shape the nodal root system is taking in your field. V-4 corn gives even a better look at how the system is developing!

The Black Cutworm first cutting date was predicted for May 23 in our area. I did see just a few plants cut last Friday – so I encourage you to begin scouting all emerged cornfields for this pest. Remember that ISU entomologists have also revised the treatment thresholds to reflect the higher prices of corn, which is now 2% of the plants cut for ¾ inch cutworms; and for cutworms are 1 inch long the threshold was lowered down to a 2-3% stand loss. Farmers who planted corn with the Herculex trait should also check their fields to insure that cutworms are being controlled – research has shown that control may not be adequate if cutworm pressure is heavy.

Soybean Notes: Beans are emerging in many fields. Don't forget to evaluate your soybean stand. A tool I find useful in determining the adequacy of a stand is titled "Soybean Replant Decisions," found here: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1851.pdf>. Lots of good information, including tables and charts for stand measuring in all types of row widths. It's another of those publications I try to carry with me at this time of year!

Although the winter was tough on them, scouting for **Bean Leaf Beetles** should begin right after emergence, particularly on fields that did not have an insecticide seed treatment. The first emerging fields in a neighborhood often seem to attract the highest level of infestation, so I would scout those first. Some good news - Palle Pedersen, ISU Extension Soybean Specialist, told me that the pressure seems quite low on his early planted soybean trails he has established around the state. However, I still think it is wise to scout your fields. The early season threshold is actually quite high – about 1 beetle per plant.

Extension Crop Update, continued

Alfalfa Management: The two Plymouth County fields that I have been monitoring were averaging 24" in height of the tallest stem today, and were now in the bud stage. According to the PEAQ web site: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/crops/peaqest1.htm>, **the relative feeding value of the forage in these fields is now at 181.**

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. We are getting close to that!

Alfalfa weevils continue at low levels in Iowa – I have heard of no thresholds reached, and still 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. Threshold data 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. It looks like we won't need to treat before harvest, but watch how these fields green back up very carefully – these critters feeding on new growth can sometimes inhibit how quickly the plants resume growth after cutting.

Weed Management – is it time? I noticed today that some fields are taking on a widespread green color, due to emerging weeds. The critical period for managing weeds is influenced by many things, like density, relative time of emergence of weeds and corn, weed species and cultural and environmental factors. 35 experiments over several states that looked at post herbicide treatment to glyphosate resistant corn averaged 2% yield lost when weeds were killed at 2.5" in height. If left until 7.5" before treated, then the yield loss averaged 9%. The worst case scenario at the 2" treatment height caused 13% yield loss. The best case scenario? 0% yield loss.

As Bob Hartzler, ISU Extension Weed Specialist says in this recent ISU Integrated Crop Management News Article (found here: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/CropNews/2008/0523BobHartzler.htm>), "Due to our inability to accurately predict the critical period, it is wise to act conservatively when determining when to apply postemergence herbicides. Weed density is probably the most important factor influencing the critical period, and fields with heavy infestations should be treated as quickly as possible after weed emergence." Scout, measure weed height (don't guess!), and pull the trigger when necessary!

Weather Information of Interest: See Elwynn Taylor's most recent comments on the disappearance of La Nina, and also an article outlining where you can find weather information on the internet. Both can be found, along with lots of other very good crop management articles, on the ISU Integrated Crop news web site: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/CropNews/>. While you are there, subscribe to the newsletter! It's free.