

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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Thoughts about Soybeans in NW Iowa: At the time of this writing, most of the soybeans in NW Iowa have been planted, and maybe about half have emerged. I have some concerns for areas of Lyon County that have again missed rain, and if planted into ground that was worked quite a bit, some seeds might be laying in dry soil. Otherwise, emergence looks to be progressing quite well! In past newsletters I have written a lot about the right depth for planting corn – due to the need for establishment of nodal root systems at 1” deep. Soybean root systems are different, they aren’t as critical about the perfect depth, as long as they get the moisture and soil contact needed to get the tap-root system established into the soil. However, I do like planting depths of one to 1.5 inches, and we should work to keep this as consistent as possible. Are you in a situation where you need to think about a replant? See Palle Pedersen’s publication “Soybean Replant Decisions” here: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1851.pdf>. It’s one of those references to have with you when checking fields in the spring.

I have had the opportunity to walk several fields with producers who were **no-tilling** their soybeans for the first time. In a few fields these producers were struggling with getting all the seeds to the depth desired because of the residue they had to manage in these fields. One thing they all had in common? They were using a rippled or fluted coulter in front of the row openers, and while running over the stalk residue, they were unable to get the planter unit into the ground consistently. My suggestion? Either use a straight coulter or no coulter, but make certain openers are sharp and adjusted well for no-tilling soybeans into cornstalk residue. Why? The planter units in many cases were lifted up due to the amount of down-pressure it takes to push all these units, and surface area of the coulters, into the soil. Try pushing a shovel into the ground. Then try pushing three at the same time through cornstalks. It’s a lot harder – and takes a lot more weight to do that, right? This is kind of like what has to happen – through corn stalks – with those additional coulters.

In my mind, row cleaners for no-till soybeans are nice, but not necessarily needed. Again, beans are different than corn! I like a cleared area to warm the soil for corn emergence and to help get uniform seeding depth (row cleaners and/or coulters?). Although soybean emergence will be slower with no residue movement, in our well-drained NW Iowa soils this doesn’t seem to matter much, if any. However, that residue certainly keeps the soil moist around the seed much longer when it gets dry! In the glacial soils of North Central Iowa my answers might be a little different. But for the Loess soils of NW Iowa this seems to work pretty well.

What about the fields where the planters had trouble getting the seed into the soil? There will be some small gaps, and the stand will not be perfectly uniform. But, gaps look to be less than 18”, and total stands still look

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like they will be well over 100,000. What is interesting is that if seeds were placed on top of the soil (into a small v) but below the residue, they seem to be doing a great job of getting a root established and emerging. These seeds, still below residue, stayed moist and are progressing. However, if these same seeds lost residue cover in the wind before the root established, I think they would not survive. These crop producers will work towards improving seed placement for the future, but they escaped problems for this year, I believe.

Want to discuss these issues? Give me a call or send an e-mail!

Black Cutworm Update – The predicted beginning date for black cutworm cutting is May 31 for the NW corner of Iowa, but maybe a few days earlier for Woodbury County. A significant flight of black cutworm moths occurred in Iowa during April 28-30. I recommend that you check low-lying spots and traditional trouble spots in cornfields later this week. Keep checking until the corn has four collars. For more details, see the BCW update articles in the ICM News: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/CropNews/>.

Alfalfa Management: The two Plymouth County fields that I have been monitoring were averaging 27" 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 168.**

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 seem to be at low levels in Iowa – I have heard of no thresholds reached, and still have seen none 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.

Mark your Calendar:

June 11, 5:30 p.m. (supper served) - Rye Cover Crop Field Day, near Pierson, Woodbury County

June 30, 9:30 a.m. - NW Research Farm Field Day, near Calumet

July 22 – Upper Midwest Manure Handling Expo, near Boone. Web site:

http://www.ag.iastate.edu/wastemgmt/expo_home.htm, we might be putting a bus together if people are interested!

July 29 – Soybean Cyst Nematode Workshop, Ames

July 30 – Corn Nematode Workshop, Ames (see this ICM News article for details:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/CropNews/2009/0526tylka.htm>)

Throughout Summer – Agribusiness Education Program, Ames: <http://www.aep.iastate.edu/>

More details on these programs will be shared as the dates grow closer!

"Thanks for Subscribing!"