

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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A Rain Would Help! Although our subsoil moisture has barely been tapped at this time, the surface of our soil is really getting dry. For most fields it is not a problem right now, we have roots that are exploring the zones where there is moisture. But, we have some soybean fields where seeds are sitting in dry soil, and some cornfields that are really struggling to get the nodal root system established for a variety of reasons, and these are showing more stress, too. When we get to about 4-collar corn is when my phone often gets busier. That is because fields that struggle to get those roots established often start looking very uneven at that time – a time when the need for nodal roots to feed the plant becomes more critical. Causes I have seen so far include soil compaction, a little insect injury, herbicide injury, dry soils where roots are trying to grow, and anhydrous burn to root systems from spring application. You have to dig and examine roots from each field to determine what the cause is in each situation. One inch of rain would certainly allow most of those issues to grow through the problem!

Anhydrous Burn on Roots: In the previous paragraph I mentioned that I have seen anhydrous burn on some root systems this year. I am not surprised – we have had little rain in NW Iowa since it was applied in many fields this spring – both are factors that increase the risk of root injury. It seemed to me that in one field we were in, the depth of the anhydrous application was about 5 inches deep – a little shallow for a spring application, in my opinion. John Sawyer wrote a very descriptive article (includes an N burn injury picture) that discusses why damage can occur, how it occurs, and management suggestions. Take a look! http://www.agronext.iastate.edu/soilfertility/currenttopics/Ammonia-SeedlingInjury_5_22_09.pdf

Common Stalk Borers - Common Stalk Borers move from field borders (brome plants) to the outside rows of cornfields, and can cause significant damage to those outside rows if not protected and populations are high in the brome. We can predict when this occurs by knowing that these pests develop based on growing degree days – base 41 degrees. Recent calculations for NW Iowa would predict that about 10% of these critters will move out of brome about the 20th of June, which is likely a good timed time to treat border rows if this has been a problem for you. Some, but not all, Bt hybrids seem to give help reducing problems with these pests, but if you do not have any Bt's along the edge of fields and this has been a problem for you, I would start scouting about the 15th. Look for “dead-head” brome in high numbers that signal the migration is beginning. Watch for an article in ICM News that is likely to appear soon: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/CropNews/>.

Extension Crop Update, continued

Cover Crop Field Day June 11, Woodbury County: Cover crops are plants that cover the soil and supplement the growing season of annual grain crops, planted in the fall after harvest. Benefits include reduction in nutrient losses, reduced soil erosion and improved soil structure. Typical cover crops are rye, oats, wheat, barley, and triticale. This free Cover Crop field day will be held at the Lewis Byers farm, located at 3823 110th Street, Pierson, starting at 5:30 pm. The farm is approximately three-fourths of a mile north of the intersection of county roads D-12 and L-25, northeast of Pierson. Hosted by ISU Extension, the Iowa Learning Farm project, and SWCD's in Woodbury and Plymouth Counties, the event includes a complimentary evening meal.

Speakers include Jeremy Singer, research agronomist with the National Soil Tilth Lab, discussing cover crop establishment timing as well as planting methods and types of cover crops and ISU Extension Agricultural Engineer Mark Hanna will offer equipment pointers for planting crops into rye cover. A discussion about the effects of winter rye on crop nutrient cycling, especially N requirements, will be led by myself and Jerry Sindt, Woodbury County District Conservationist with NRCS. Additionally, there will be a question and answer session with Mr. Byers. He is one of four area farmers who aerial seeded winter rye last fall and then planted into the cover crop this spring.

The event is free and the public is invited to attend, rain or shine, but an RSVP is suggested. Please call the Woodbury NRCS/SWCD office, 712/943-6727; or the Plymouth NRCS/SWCD office, 712/546-8858.

Black Cutworm Update – I have heard no NW Iowa reports about Black Cutworm injury, but now is the time to look if your corn is less than 5 leaf-collars in size. For more details, see the BCW update articles in the ICM News: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/CropNews/>. Erin Hodgson, ISU Extension's new Extension Entomologist, has developed a dynamic threshold calculator, based on yields, prices, etc. Check out this calculator in a recent ISU ICM Newsletter article: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/CropNews/2009/0527hodgson.htm>.

It's Time for the Late Spring N Test. Lots of fields are at the size needed for taking late spring soil N tests. These samples should be taken when corn is between 6 and 12 inches tall, which corresponds to V3 to V6 stage corn. Select a sample area of 10 acres or less of similar soils. Take 16 to 24 cores to a depth of 12 inches. Samples should be kept cool and sent to the lab as soon as possible. Detailed instructions and the interpretation of results are found in *Nitrogen Fertilizer Recommendations for Corn in Iowa* (Pm-1714), <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1714.pdf>.

Mark your Calendar:

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

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