

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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Crop & Insect Update

Most of the corn in northeast Iowa is in varying degrees of the R5 or dent stage, reports Terry Basol, ISU Extension Field Agronomist. The new publication, *Corn Growth and Development (PMR 1009)*, splits R5 into substages depending on the progression of the milk line. This is a critical stage for optimum test weight development. At the beginning of R5, only forty-five percent of the total kernel dry weight is accumulated. This leaves more than fifty percent to be accumulated in the R5 stage. Environmental stress factors occurring during this period will reduce the kernel weight of the plant. Once the corn enters the R5 stage, it has approximately thirty-three days before it reaches physiological maturity (R6) or “black layer.”

Soybeans in northeast Iowa are in varying degrees of the R5 stage as well. Moisture during this stage will be very helpful to grain fill, since this is the stage where the greatest seed growth occurs. R5 is determined when there is a seed that is one-eighth inch long in the pod at one of the four most uppermost nodes on the main stem. The seed continues to grow or expand in the pod until it fills the width of the pod cavity, which is identified as the R6 stage.

The brown marmorated stink bug, (BMSB), is a serious plant pest and household invader that has been making its way around the United States for the past decade. Recently Iowa State University Extension Plant and Insect Diagnostic Clinic (PIDC) and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship confirmed that a single dead specimen of BMSB, was collected this February in Cedar Rapids. This is the first confirmation of this pest in Iowa. However it is not known if this find indicates an established population or an isolated individual as BMSB travels readily in shipping containers and with people.

BMSB feeds by puncturing plant tissues (leaves, fruits, stems) and sucking on plant juices with its beak, similar to aphids or leafhoppers. Damage can range from mild to severe and may appear as deformation, distortion, speckling, stunting, etc.

If the BMSB behaves in Iowa as it has in other states, then homeowners will be the first to note its presence as it is a fall accidental invader. Homeowners on the East Coast describe the stink bug invasion as worse than boxelder bugs and lady beetles, combined.

It is this habit of spending the winter in buildings that has aided the dispersal of BMSB by movement in containers and vehicles. Laura Jesse, ISU PIDC Extension entomologist and Erin Hodgson, ISU Department of Entomology (the source of information for this column) request that if you observe any insects similar to the BMSB in your house this winter, that you submit a sample (at no charge) or send a digital photo to the ISU Plant and Insect Clinic.

Iowa State entomologists are actively looking for brown marmorated stink bugs throughout the state because this invasive species has the potential to damage corn, soybean and many other plants.

For more information, contact the Grundy office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.