

Ag Radio programs for August 21 - 27, 2017

Insect feeding damage in sorghum

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I finally got to spend a day last week out in the fields scouting. Boy that was fun!!!! As you all know, my favorite crop is sorghum so I got into as many sorghum fields as I could - I may have been in every sorghum field in the county, no more than there are. One of the first things I noticed was the number of beneficial insects that were present. This would be things like lacewings, lady beetles and hover flies. I was finding adults and immatures which was rather disconcerting as these can all feed on aphids. Yet I was finding very few aphids and none that were sugarcane aphids. I suspect that the beneficials had been building up elsewhere and were just moving into the sorghum fields. Their presence is, to me, a good sign of biological control. I also was finding no honeydew which is a common indicator of high sugar cane aphid populations. Very good to be this far into August and have few aphids in sorghum fields. I did find one field that was really loaded up with corn borer. It's sometimes a surprise to producers that corn borers will be in sorghum, but they can. Their damage shows up as leaves with holes in a row across the leaf. They get down in the whorl of the plant and eat through the leaves as they come up through that whorl. They very rarely can be enough to cause damage. Sorghum was really starting to head out and the heads that I was examining were very normal looking and showing no insect pests. BUT we all know how fast this can change so we need to walk through milo fields every few days in the coming weeks. If you start seeing anything, call me! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Soil testing for wheat

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Okay, wheat production economics still aren't really rosy which means that fine tuning fertilizer applications through good soil testing is even more important. The next couple of weeks would be a very good time to do this by the way! Our basic test is going to give us soil pH, phosphorus and potassium levels. If you are growing wheat for grain only, meaning you aren't going to graze the wheat, then soil test phosphorus levels over 20 ppm are adequate for you to forego starter fertilizer. If you are going to graze the wheat, then an extra 20 pounds or more of phosphorus will likely be in order unless you have soil test levels over 80 ppm. Potassium is rarely an issue but we are seeing dropping levels with more and more corn and soybean production. We rarely have soil pH levels that are too acid for wheat. Too acid for alfalfa or beans, yes, but wheat, not very often. But it's important to know this. Now comes the test that no one wants to do - profile nitrogen. Ideally a profile test for nitrogen should be down to 24 inches. If it isn't at least 12 inches, don't waste your time or money on a nitrate test. High fall profile nitrogen tests have shown very high correlation with wheat yield when no fertilizer is applied. So you do not lose that nitrogen over the winter. All it takes is a little time and sweat to pull those 24 inch samples - at least a half dozen in a field. The potential return is quite high. And since you took the time to pull the samples, spend a couple more bucks and check S and Cl too. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Controlling big weeds in wheat stubble

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. In the pre-notill days of wheat production we never worried about size of weeds in wheat stubble. We went out and disked it once then plowed it under and we were ready to go. For some producers, if those weeds got away from them, that may still be the best option. If you have a lot of big weeds in your wheat stubble then likely more than a few of them are pigweed and they will carry at least some glyphosate resistance. So glyphosate alone will likely not control the weeds. Now let's take a look around your field. If the wheat stubble field is adjacent to a soybean field you have potential issues. The best additives to glyphosate for control of those large weeds are going to be 2,4-D or dicamba. Both have potential issues with drift damage on the beans. If there are beans next door, then 2,4-D amine is your best option. One thing that many people aren't aware of is that adding AMS to the spray mix to enhance glyphosate activity also increases the volatility of ALL dicamba formulations. In fact the Extendimax label says not to add any pH buffering compounds as these will greatly increase the volatility of the dicamba. As an alternative to glyphosate you could use gramoxone. Keep in mind though that you need to be applying 20 gallons of carrier per acre or more to get good coverage. If you are going to corn or sorghum next year you can add atrazine for some residual control. If going to beans next year consider adding metribuzin. Or if you are planting wheat this fall, a tank mix with Sharpen would be a good option. Regardless, get to work on those big weeds now! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Dual purpose wheat

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. A lot of people plant wheat for grain production. A few people plant wheat for cattle forage. And some folks plant wheat for both. But too many people don't go into the wheat planting season intentionally planning to do both. Too often wheat is planted and if it comes up quickly and looks pretty good, then they throw a fence around it and graze it. But they didn't really plan from the get-go to graze the field, it was more of an afterthought. If you have cattle and think you want to graze some wheat, approach your management of that wheat crop from that direction. To start with you are going to plant 2 to 3 weeks earlier than you would for grain only. So try to find a variety that has good forage production as well as Hessian Fly, barley yellow dwarf and wheat streak resistance. I can help narrow things down quickly and I'll tell you right now we don't have that PERFECT grazing wheat yet. Seeding rate needs to be higher as you will lose some stand. Figure on 120 pounds of seed per acre. Warm soils will shorten coleoptile length so you need to keep the seeding depth at 1 to 1½ inches. If you don't have good soil moisture just dust it in and pray for rain. Even with high soil phosphorus levels, you will probably see quicker germination and higher forage yields with 30 to 60 pounds of starter P. For maximum forage yield without impacting grain yield, you also need to figure on an extra 60 to 90 pounds of nitrogen over standard grain only rates. Get at least 30 to 75 pounds of nitrogen down at planting or preplant, to insure good early season growth for grazing. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Estimating Yields

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. From time to time over the years I've been asked to estimate yields of almost any crop that is grown in county. Sometimes it's the media that's asking, other times it's individual producers - it doesn't really matter, because I basically don't do it. Once harvest has started and I've had a chance to visit with a few producers, then I may make an early estimate, but to what end? The only yield estimate that matters is the one when the grain is in the combine and on the way to the elevator or storage. Crop insurers are sometimes asked to make estimates following hail damage. But even those folks are now often just taking notes and photos and then waiting for the final harvest. I remember years ago one producer collecting a check for 80% hail damage on a wheat crop and then harvesting 40 bushel wheat off of it. I really doubt that the field had a 200 bushel potential pre-hail storm. So again I ask, why do you want or need a yield estimate? If you want one just for bragging rights or for curiosity, I will give you the formulas and come out to show you how to calculate it. But I'll let you do the calculation. The one time I could see a valid reason would be in a drought year and if you are trying to determine whether to harvest for grain, or harvest the plant for livestock forage. I don't think we'll have that issue this year. So if you want the formulas and want to learn how to do it for beans, or corn or grain sorghum, let me know. But in the meantime, I'll avoid looking in my crystal ball, because as Barry Flinchbaugh once said, he who lives by the crystal ball, eventually eats glass! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.