

Dodged A Bullet?

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. As early last week unfolded and we watched all the photos from western Kansas roll in, it became very obvious that we dodged a weather bullet in that we didn't get that 8 or 10 or 16 inches of snow that they got in some areas. It'll likely be another week to ten days before we can fully assess the impact of that damaging storm. Yes, we had a cold morning ahead of that and may have had some heads nipped by frost, but that's nothing compared to what those producers out west are dealing with. We are going to probably see some problems with wheat running out of nitrogen because of all the wet soils. Not that we get too concerned with protein levels of our wheat crop but this could also lead to lower protein than we might normally see. It's truly too late to try to do any makeup nitrogen applications - we're just going to live with that. There were several things that I did notice when I was out in wheat fields last week. There were a few areas that were drowning out - gee, given how much rain we've got, that's not a surprise. I was seeing flag leaves and flag leaf -1 that were showing some very suspect markings that I suspect will be exploding with rust pustules soon. But I also saw a lot of flag leaves where the leaf tip was purplish yellow. This is a good indicator of barley yellow dwarf. I also saw a lot of uneven stands of wheat which is also an indication of fall infestation of barley yellow dwarf. This is a virus carried by aphids. Most common infection occurs in early planted wheat. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Wheat Fungicides?

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. We are rapidly running out of time to treat with fungicides. I was out in fields last week and while I didn't see anything flowering yet, there were a lot of heads in many fields. With warmer weather things are exploding fast - both wheat growth and disease development. While I was walking fields I did not see any rust pustules but I saw a lot of leaves that sure looked suspect and I'm sure if I went back in those fields today there would be pustules breaking open. I also heard planes flying that I suspect were applying fungicide. When it comes to how late you can apply fungicides it comes down to one of two basic things. The first is stage of growth. Many products, especially the strobilurin class of fungicides has a limit of application of Feekes 10.5 growth stage in wheat, which is flowering. The second possible restriction is a post application waiting period until harvest. Many of the triazoles simply say 30 days to harvest. In most cases, once the plants finish flowering, it's going to be all of 30 days until harvest so this seems to work out well. A few products call for 35, 40 or 45 days from application until harvest and some have a combination of growth stage and days to harvest. Obviously most of the time we are looking at protecting the flag leaf from stripe and/or leaf rust but another concern, when we are dealing with rainy weather, is head scab. Head scab is going to occur when we have rainy weather during flowering. Fungicide applications at that time can halt head scab infection but it has to be timed right and only the triazoles are labeled for head scab protection. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

2016 Year in Review

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Last week we had a Farm Management Association summary meeting. It was really exciting because they had JUST gotten the last analyses done and they could give us the region by region net farm income for 2016 and the statewide average. For those who aren't familiar, the Kansas Farm Management Association is comprised of over 2,000 farms and over 2,600 farmers of all kinds all across the state. The information generated by these farms is considered to be some of the best data in the country and fairly representative of "average" farmers, whatever average means, in the state of Kansas. After having some phenomenal net farm incomes several years ago, things had come crashing down in 2015 with a statewide net farm income of under \$5,000 - basically a 95% drop from just a few years before that. With commodity prices being no better, in fact lower from 2015 to 2016, I was concerned about what 2016 would be like. With no further ado, I was pleasantly surprised that state wide the average moved back up to just over \$43,000 per farm. In all reality, this figure, while better than \$5,000 still doesn't allow for positive returns to management and labor nor may it allow for proper debt servicing. But it's a step in the right direction. There are six associations in the state and the high low range was a negative \$5,352 in the south central region to a positive \$109,344 in the southeast. Our regional, the northcentral, was a positive \$34,000. Why the big difference between SC and SE? Simple. SC is heavy into wheat production and SE is heavy in soybean production. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Soil Temperatures

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. You'll hear me often talk about soil temperatures and it's too warm for this or too cold for that and so on. Two things in crop production are very critical to soil temperature. Application of nitrogen and planting of corn. You want soil temperatures under 50 before you apply anhydrous ammonia in the fall so that it is stable and doesn't start to convert from the ammonia form to more easily lost nitrate forms. But for right now we want soil temperatures above 55 for corn planting. Two weeks ago, ahead of that crazy snowstorm in western Kansas, soil temperatures were actually dropping. Cloudy cold weather with an equally cold rain resulted in soil temperatures going down when they should have been heading up. Granted, soil temperatures in the spring can be a roller coaster and they rebounded fairly quickly late last week. But corn that was planted ahead of that cold snap, may have gone into soil that was 55 degrees, just barely, but then cooled back down below 55 for several days. 55 degrees is basically that magic temperature when corn germination starts to happen substantially faster. Why is this important? For starters, a corn seed in the ground is a living breathing organism and when it starts to germinate it is very susceptible, for a period of time, to attack by various organisms. Which is why virtually all corn seed is treated with a fungicide seed protectant. But the longer the seed lays in the ground the protection starts to diminish. The sooner the plant gets growing aggressively, the better its chances of surviving and producing. Soil temps are important! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Where does profitability come from?

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. I'm just going to warn you that I picked up enough good information at the Farm Management Summary meeting last week for a week or two worth of radio programs. But I won't give them to you all at once - I'll sprinkle them across the next few weeks. One of the questions that often comes up is what mix of crops should I grow. Well, if you were going strictly on profitability you'd be growing all soybeans right now. But we all know that you can't do that year in and year out. That's a system guaranteed to implode on you.

Looking back at last year's figures, once you got past soybeans, everything else lost money with corn losing the least amount, then wheat and then grain sorghum. I think we can quickly see the impact of those figures simply in the acres that you will see planted around the region this year.

Wheat acres are way down, sorghum has gone from our number 2 crop 25 years ago to a distant 4th. It's all going to corn and soybeans. Now let's take this a step further and look at full season and double crop soybeans. Double crop soybeans made good money last year, mainly because we had extraordinary yields. But to grow double crop beans, you first have to have wheat planted. If you know you're going to have good summer rainfall, then you can lose money on wheat and cover it, and then some, with the double crop beans. That's a risky way to try to raise wheat. So what crops should you plant? You maintain a rotation that includes at least three crops, one of them being wheat so that you can do a better job of controlling weeds, diseases and insects. And hope it's profitable! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.