

Ag Radio programs for September 11 - 17, 2017

Crop Scouting Update

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Again last week I was walking a lot of soybean fields scouting for insect pests. There has been many significant changes in the status of pests and conditions in the fields. Good news is that I still was not finding soybean aphids AND the green cloverworms are gone or about to be gone thanks to the fungus disease that attacks them most years. I was rarely finding soybean podworm and while I was occasionally seeing apparent evidence, bean leaf beetles were few and far between. One of the challenges of scouting soybean fields is trying to decide what insect is doing what. Holes in leaves can be cloverworms, bean leaf beetles, thistle caterpillars or several other incidental foliage feeders. Holes in pods can be bean leaf beetles, cloverworms, or podworms. So we can't just go by damage alone, we've got to look for the insects also and then how many of them we are finding. What I was still finding were thistle caterpillars and based on the number of cocoons I was seeing, we're going to see a bunch more butterflies in the next ten days. I was also finding stink bugs, but at lower numbers than two weeks ago. But here's the kicker right now. These soybean fields are out of soil moisture and insects are the least of my concerns right now. If we don't get some rains in the next week, and it's appearing to be rather dry in the forecast, insect damage is the least of our problems. If you haven't sprayed yet, I'd just put plans on hold and let's wait a few more days and see where we are with the chances for rain. If a good chance is showing up, then maybe spray, otherwise don't! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Grazing Cover Crops

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. With the growing use of cover crops, and especially grazing the cover crops, here's an interesting thought, and it applies to grazing wheat in the fall as well. Is your grazing of these crops illegal? What I'm looking at here is strictly from pesticide labels perspective. Any pesticide, whether that's a seed treatment, an insecticide, fungicide or herbicide used on the current or even a previous crop, is going to have a label that dictates, among other things, waiting periods for utilization of that crop and in the case of herbicides not only utilization but how long until certain other crops can be planted. While we sometimes pay attention to recropping intervals, we more often do it out of concern for the crop, not grazing of that crop. Now, I'm not bringing this up to say that everyone grazing a crop out there is breaking a law, but rather just to make you aware that maybe checking those herbicide labels might be a good idea. IF you were found grazing a crop that was an off label practice, livestock could be quarantined or even destroyed. How often has that happened? Not very often if ever. Often times there are grazing restrictions simply because the company labeling the herbicide hasn't done residue testing and probably won't because of the expense. They often just fall back on the idea of knowing that herbicide residues will be gone in so many months so that becomes the recropping interval. Just for fun, check the labels on your herbicides some time and see what you may find! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Wheat Blends

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Every fall I am asked by producers about new wheat varieties and usually a few folks ask about wheat blends which are seeding mixtures made up of 2 to 4 different wheat varieties. They were all the rage a few years ago, but now they seem to be settling into an accepted part of wheat production. The theory with a blend is that you put equal parts of certified wheat seed into this blend. The selection is of complimentary varieties - maybe one has really strong leaf disease package and another one a real strong yield pedigree, etc. The idea is that if one problem pops up that takes out one variety, the others will fill in and compensate. A blend will rarely top the yield trials, but it will also rarely be in last place. To me, a blend is safe. If you guess the season just right and plant the one or two varieties that have all the right factors in any given year, you can look like a genius. But if you plant one with great yield but low rust resistance and we get hit with a lot of rust, you'll be spraying or wishing you'd planted something else. With a blend, you avoid those would've, could've, should've moments. Ultimately the best place to use blends is where you have numerous landlords. You use the same blend across them all and no one landlord will feel like you favored another landlord. Now, one word of caution about blends. If you want to hold seed back, only do it for one year. If you start holding seed back for several years the blend will start to lose that balance of varieties that you started with and you will likely wind up with one variety dominating. One year you'll probably be okay though. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Taking notes during corn harvest

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. One thing that I feel we still don't do a good enough job of is taking notes during harvest. Corn harvest is getting under way and it may prove to be an interesting one given how the spigot was turned off after those big rains in early August. I know that we mentally note things as we are harvesting, but do you take the time to actually write down what you are seeing. With the droughty weather we are more likely to be seeing increased ear drop. As you roll through the fields you may notice that but 45 days from now you may well be going, gosh, was the in the Smith Field or the Jones Field? And I know it was worse on one hybrid than the other but was it the field closest to the creek or closer to the road? Take a minute or two and write it down. Yield monitors help us know where we had what yields, but there's so many other things that we need to keep track of. There are many different traits that a plant breeder strives to incorporate into a new hybrid but there's no way to test new hybrids under every condition. When I was a plant breeding grad student we found amazing differences in hybrids from parent lines that were selected in three different states. Environment of parental selection has a big impact on progeny performance is how I think I said it in my thesis. So take note of things that you may not even consider crucial. Anything that makes you go, hmm, that's interesting, write it down. Then compare those notes against your yield monitor maps and share them with your seed dealer to get back to the company. You never know what you may help find! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Not All Thistles Are Bad

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Every year in late August and September, I get phone calls from anxious homeowners or concerned passerbys about all those thistles that are blooming hither, thither, and yon. So on the one hand, 40 years of efforts to make people aware of the need to control that noxious weed musk thistle HAS done some good. Unfortunately though, it appears that we didn't fill you in on enough of the details. Thistle is a word we use to describe a huge global family of plants. Artichokes, like what some people eat, are considered a thistle. Most have beautiful composite flowers that are very popular with butterflies and pollinators. We have native thistles throughout Kansas. They have been here forever and they aren't a problem, unless someone is mismanaging the land. But man, in their infinite wisdom has brought thistles that aren't native to North America to the US and as is often the case when a plant is moved out of it's native location, they become a problem. Of all noxious thistles we have in the US we are fortunate that only one has been a problem locally and that is Musk Thistle. But the thing to keep in mind about musk thistle is that it blooms early in the year and the bloom is on a stem devoid of leaves at the top and the bloom bends over (hence the nickname Nodding Thistle). The thistles that are blooming now don't have those characteristics. Most of what we are seeing are Tall Thistles and Wavyleaf thistles, rarely Bull Thistles. None of these concern me and we don't need to control them. So don't panic over blooming thistles now, just enjoy them! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.