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Kansas Insect Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants, and Extension Personnel

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Resumption of GDD Accumulations.....

After a 11-13 day period (depending on location in Kansas) where GDD accumulations totaled ZERO, warmer temperatures over the last 3 days has produced some (albeit it minimal) GDD accumulations. Thus there has been little progression in season totals. However, the process could rapidly escalate with a spell of warmer daytime **accompanied by** warmer evening temperatures. March 1 through April 18 GDD accumulations are as follow: Baxter Springs – 362.5; Clyde – 213.5; El Dorado – 263.5; Elkhart – 170.5; Ellsworth – 245; Emporia – 273; Garden City – 171; Hays – 166.5; Hiawatha – 226.5; Hutchinson – 254; Independence – 252; Kansas City – 251; Lawrence – 246; Manhattan – 235.5; Newton – 239.5; Olathe – 246.5; Pittsburg – 359.5; St. Francis – 91.5; Salina – 245; Topeka – 273; and Wichita – 265.5.

Billbugs in Turf?.....

A recent inquiry was made of how to control billbugs that were causing damage in a fescue lawn. The client reported that his lawn “looked sick” and wanted to implement control measures for billbug. This instance serves to illustrate several points.

First, much of the current discoloration in lawns can be attributed to damage caused by the recent record low temperatures. Cool-season grasses, especially, usually recover nicely, apparently none-the-worse-for-wear.

Second, it is important to be knowledgeable about different pest species (regardless the host crop/site) in terms of their seasonal development and habits. While adult billbugs can cause damage to turf (chewing/excavating ovipositional cavities in grass stems), this damage is considered minimal. Rather, it is the damage caused by larvae feeding on grass roots that cause damage to turf, and, **this is not evident until the latter part of June and into July.**

Finally, at this time of year, the only insect pest likely to cause visible damage to turf would be overwintered sod webworms which resume feeding in the early spring. Larvae feed on the grass blades (sort of like mowing a lawn) but seldom damage/kill grass. Rapid springtime growth of cool-season grasses usually offsets sod webworm feeding damage. However, under stress conditions (extremely dry weather or possibly this year's temperature-induced "set-back") and in the presence of sufficient numbers, sod webworm damage could occur. This remains to be seen, and would most likely be confined to occasional instances as opposed to widespread "outbreaks".

To verify the presence of any pest species, a hands-and-knees inspection of the turf/lawn is required. For sod webworms, part the grass/crowns and look for: cut grass blades and greenish frass pellets which indicate current feeding; silken tubes/webbing produced by sod webworms; and/or the actual presence of grayish/brownish "spotted" sod webworms. If present, visit a local garden center or other retail outlet where numerous "homeowner" products are available for controlling sod webworms.

Bob Bauernfeind

Hessian Fly:

Hessian flies are reported to be causing losses in wheat in north Texas. If wheat fields have survived the recent freezing weather and had Hessian fly infestations in 2006, conditions may be ideal for the flies to cause additional damage to the already stressed crop. There are no rescue treatments available for Hessian fly infestations but these infestations should be considered when evaluating your yield potential.

Jeff Whitworth

Honey Bee Colony Collapse Disorder:

You may have heard all of the recent hype about cell phones causing the death of honey bees. However, the story does not appear to be that simple. In reading various articles it appears that the recent media attention focused on cell phones as a cause of the decline in honey bee colonies is speculation at best. The "research" cited was actually done with cordless phone base stations embedded in honey bee hives not really that closely related to standard cell phone use. Currently there appear to be many theories about why bee keepers across the county are reporting unusually high losses of honey bee colonies over the last several months, but few real answers. Work is current underway to determine what maybe causing the decline in honey bee colonies, but it may be a while before the real causes are identified.

For more information check out the wikipedia web site at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colony_Collapse_Disorder

One of the sources cited on this web site is the Mid-Atlantic Apiculture Research and

Extension Consortium <http://maarec.cas.psu.edu/> -- which produced one of the first reports on this recent bee crisis: <http://www.ento.psu.edu/MAAREC/pressReleases/FallDwindleUpdate0107.pdf> and also made a recent report before the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Agriculture, Subcommittee on Horticulture and Organic Agriculture, on Colony Collapse Disorder in Honey Bee Colonies in the United States, March 29, 2007 <http://maarec.cas.psu.edu/CCDPpt/CoxFosterTestimonyFinal.pdf> .

Phil Sloderbeck

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Sincerely,

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