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## Kansas Insect Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants, and Extension Personnel

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### Insects Noticeable in Some Wheat Fields

Over the last couple of weeks calls on wheat pests have increased. While this is probably mostly a result of more people taking the time to take a close look at wheat fields now that harvest is winding down it may be worth taking note of what others have been finding in their wheat fields.

**Flea beetles** have been reportedly stripping the foliage in some fields. These tiny jumping beetles are dark and shiny and strip off the upper surface of leaves causing whitish streaks to develop. They are typically a problem along the margins of fields, especially in western Kansas and in early plantings. Injury tends to be more severe when beetles are present as plants emerge and a population of 3 - 5 beetles per row foot can kill seedling plants.

Large numbers of **leafhoppers** have been reported in some fields. This is probably the result of leafhoppers moving into wheat fields as other hosts dry down. I have not seen samples of the leaf hoppers from these fields but correspondence with entomologists in other states indicates that more than one species could be active at this time of year but one of the more common species is the Aster Leafhopper, *Macrostelus quadrilineatus*. Economic thresholds have not been established, however it is not hard to imagine a situation on seedling wheat (2-3 leaves) where loss of chlorophyll combined with drought stress might lead to seedling death. However, large well established stands can probably withstand large numbers without much injury. Most of the calls have not indicated any noticeable damage, but heavily infested fields can take on a white, frosted appearance due to feeding. Luckily cold weather should terminate the infestation.

I have had a couple of calls indicating that they have found evidence of **Hessian fly** in fields in south central, southwest and northwest Kansas. While this seems early it may be in line with the early wheat planting in some areas and the abundance of Hessian fly seen in some areas this spring.

One producer in Finney county noticed thousands of tiny dishwater gray larvae crawling around in the soil

of his wheat field. Turns out these were **March fly larvae**, which can sometimes be abundant in soils with high organic matter. Luckily these larvae do not feed on plants and should not cause any problems for the wheat.

**Bird cherry-oat aphids** are reportedly numerous in some fields. Direct feeding damage to wheat is thought to be negligible, but this aphid can spread barley yellow dwarf virus. Conventional sprays usually are not effective in reducing virus incidence, however Imidacloprid (Gaucho and Gaucho XT) and Thiamethoxam (Cruiser) seed treatments seem to reduce BYD infection by suppressing aphid populations

## **Mysterious Webbing Explained**

Several people have reported seeing an abundance of fine webbing around fields and yards this fall. The webbing has been described as so fine that you sometimes can't see it looking directly at it, but you see a massive webbing as the sun goes down and the web reflects the light. This webbing is released by spiders in a activity called ballooning – spiderlings climb onto plants, fences, fence posts, or tree branches and release silk. As the line lengthens, the wind lifts the little spiders off it perch and floats it off to a new area. The masses of ballooning threads seen on fall days are called gossamer.

## **False Chinch Bugs on the Move**

Multiple calls have been received from home owners in central Kansas of small dull gray insects appearing by the thousands on lawns, sidewalks and sides of houses. The samples that have been sent in appear to be nymphs of the false chinch bug. Not sure where these would be coming from this time of year, but the calls have generally been from homes near CRP or grass fields. Evidently the nymphs have hatched and their host is no longer suitable for feeding and the nymphs are dispersing trying to find a new food source. Cold weather and the lack of a suitable host should mean that this will be a short lived invasion.

Sincerely,

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