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Kansas Insect Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants, and Extension Personnel

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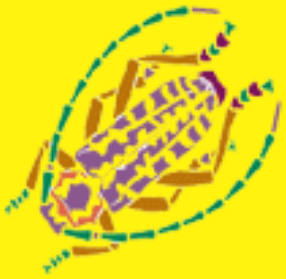

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Hessian fly:

Have gotten many questions the last few weeks relative to insecticide seed treatments and Hessian flies. First of all the trials conducted by Dr. Wilde over the last few years have proven insecticide seed treatments are very effective against aphids, grasshoppers, wireworms, white grubs, and Hessian flies. They do protect young wheat plants against these pests but only for about 30 days. Thus, are they worth the cost? It's really a matter of timing (as are all insecticide applications), if you get an infestation during that 30 day window your seedlings will be protected, but if it comes after that you may not get as much benefit as you expected. I would strongly consider using treated seed if I and my neighbors had known losses in 2004 to Hessian fly and I was planting back into stubble and there was considerable volunteer in the vicinity. By using a seed treatment you are extending that period of seedling protection, hopefully through the flies' egg-laying cycle or until cooler temperatures arrive. But you are also getting protection from the other insects listed above if those happen to be present. Insecticide treated wheat does afford protection for seedlings and the ungerminated seed but it may not be economically feasible for everybody. Remember, we are only talking about the protection afforded during the fall, we still have not determined the effect or potential for spring infestations from insecticide treated fall plots.

Jeff Whitworth

Worms in Alfalfa:

Calls continue to be received about various types of worms defoliating alfalfa. We have receive calls and samples of green cloverworms, web worms and fall armyworms. In addition it is the right time to see alfalfa caterpillars and beet armyworms. Management will depend on the species of worms present, the numbers of worms present, the size of the alfalfa and the amount of defoliation. Correct identification can be critical to determine what type of insecticide to use and what rates. Some of these insects (such as the green

cloverworm) are fairly easy to control and others (such as the beet armyworm) can be very difficult to control. The publication Identifying Caterpillars in Alfalfa, Pub Number: S120 (http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/entml2/S120.pdf) can be used to help identify these larvae. Management options are explained in Alfalfa Insect Management 2005 (http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/ENTML2/MF809.pdf).

If the alfalfa is ready to be cut then it will probably be best to go ahead with the harvest and simply watch the regrowth for signs of feeding and live larvae. Depending on the size of the worms and the weather populations may crash during harvest and not return. However if the larvae are still present after harvest then treatment may be warranted to allow the alfalfa to grow and replenish root reserves prior to winter. If the last cutting has already been made and there is a significant amount of regrowth then treatment may not be justified unless severe defoliation is taking place. In other words a few larvae feeding and causing only minor to moderate damage is probably not a concern this late in the season. The biggest concerns will probably be on newly seeded fields were feeding can kill the young plants. In this case fields need to be watch extremely close and treatments will need to be applied at the first signs of significant feeding.

Phil Sloderbeck

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Sincerely,

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