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Fall Armyworm Scouting

As hopeful as I am we'll avoid last fall's armyworm feeding onslaught, it's time to again be scouting for fall armyworm feeding. Known to feed on over 80 host plants, forage crops seem to be their hosts of choice for us in northeast Kansas this time of year.

Because they don't overwinter in Kansas, we sometimes have the luxury of early warnings from states to our south. While numbers stayed fairly low for most of the summer in Texas, pheromone trap numbers have recently increased, with offspring of flights detected there likely moving north. In fact, trapping in southwest Kansas in late July suggested increasing numbers as well, with adult moths likely active at least through southern Kansas.

Alfalfa, forage sorghum, and brome grass are the mostly likely crops requiring scouting. Damage may include ragged leaf edges and window-paning a result of larval feeding. For more information, check out our brome grass fact sheet at: www.meadowlark.kstate.edu/docs/crops-soils/Armyworms%20in%20Brome%20grass%202021.pdf.

Demonstration Plot Tour

Late summer is a great time to look at crop progress and make field evaluations prior to harvest. That's also what we intend to do at our 2022 Demonstration Plot Tour Thursday, August 18th. We'll discuss two soybean date of planting trials located in northern Jefferson County plus Phosphorous fertility work and a cover crop weed suppression project also located in the District.

The tour starts at 4:15 at the farm of Tom and Tracey Funk (17305 Marion Rd., Nortonville). Soybeans will be the focus, hitting on the aforementioned plots plus disease monitoring as the growing season wraps up. At 5:15, we'll switch to a corn, and a fertility update from KSU Nutrient Management Specialist Dr. Dorivar Ruiz-Diaz hosted by Taylor Insurance Services at the Colonial Acres Event Center (8998 US 59 Hwy/south edge of Oskaloosa). We'll wrap up with a sponsored meal courtesy of Union State Bank and Tarwater Farm & Home.

Please RSVP for meal count purposes by the end of business on Tuesday, August 16th, by calling the Meadowlark Extension District Oskaloosa Office at (785) 863-2212 or via e-mailing me at dhallaue@ksu.edu. Hope to see you there!

Are 'Free' Wood Chips a Good Thing?

From time to time, homeowners have the option of free wood chips from a tree service or municipality. While mulch *can* provide a lot of value in the landscape, there may be concerns about how they will work. Two common questions center around nitrogen tie up and termites.

If wood chips are used as mulch, there's no need for concern about nitrogen tie up. Mix them in the soil, however, and you could have a different story as the microorganisms that break down the chips require nitrogen in the process, often borrowing it from surrounding soil. If soil levels are above optimum, there's likely no problem. If not, issues may arise. Fortunately, they're not long term. When the raw organic material has been digested, the microorganisms die and release the nitrogen to surrounding vegetation once again.

Termite wise, use caution. Chips *can* be used by foraging termites as a bridge to structures even as they don't bother chips themselves (if they are three inches deep or less). To help offset potential issues, watch the depth of chips near buildings and leave a bare area several inches wide next to the house so termite activity is noticeable.