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District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Early Fungicide Applications to Corn

As corn reaches the V4-V7 growth stages, you may hear of early season fungicide applications. In a 2019 article, University of Nebraska Plant Pathologist Tamra Jackson-Ziems summarized results of a large analysis of U.S. and Canada fungicide trial results, noting the probability of positive economic return from dual modes of action fungicides at only about 40 percent of the time while a single mode of action resulted in probable positive returns on investment less than 20 percent of the time. Iowa State University Plant Pathologist Alison Robertson compared fungicide application timings, showing yield benefits from V5 applications ranging from -2.5 to 6.0 bushels/acre (2.1 bushels/A average), compared to 1.2 to 17.7 bushels/acre (6.0 bushels/acre average) with an application at VT. In short, it often didn't pay.

Why are the chances for a profitable result so variable and often not any better than 50 percent? Robertson provides a number of suggestions.

First, V5/6/7 applications are done to leaves that typically die and fall off soon after canopy closure, not substantially contributing to yield. A fungicide is active on the leaves to which it is applied, and while it may move through the leaf tissue to leaf margins, it will not translocate through the whole plant or to new leaves that emerge from the canopy.

Second, length of effectiveness varies, but many fungicides provide protection for about three weeks. Early applications are done when it's unusual to see foliar disease pressure. *If* Gray Leaf Spot pressure is heavy, we *could* see some early presence, but its seldom extreme. Work at Iowa State and Wisconsin also found no relationship between diseases like anthracnose leaf blight and later stalk rots, negating the need for early fungicide passes for preventing stalk rots.

Third, applying an early fungicide does not negate the potential need for one later. If disease is an issue, fungicide applications at VT will still be necessary – and will provide a much better chance for a positive return on investment.

In most cases, save the fungicide for later applications when ROI is better. This will not only help your bottom line, but help reduce potential fungicide resistance issues as well.

Caterpillar Feeding in Trees

I've received a few reports over the last couple of weeks about caterpillars feeding in trees. Insects like Eastern Tent Caterpillar or Brownheaded Ash Sawfly are active now.

Control can be difficult. Trees may be large and difficult to perform physical removal or chemical controls. If not performed correctly, chemical controls can also have adverse effects on beneficials. Fortunately, healthy mature trees can often handle defoliation just fine. They will try to put on new leaves, and assuming the rest of the summer is good, they'll do well. Younger trees, or trees under stress might struggle. They don't have the established recovery system of older trees, and attention may be needed to make sure additional stresses are kept to a minimum. Pay close attention to them, first and foremost. Control programs and additional attention to watering throughout the summer may be in order.

Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

Tick Talk

One of my favorite spring activities is hunting morel mushrooms, but often times I end up finding more ticks than mushrooms. There is a list of insect pest that I question why they were created and ticks go to the top, along with mosquitos! Ticks are actually not insects, *they are classified as arachnids, or relatives of spiders, scorpions and mites. Reports of heavy tick loads on livestock are surfacing, so let's dive into management of this livestock pest.*

This blood feeder commonly effects grazing livestock during the spring and summer months. In addition to the painful bites and blood loss from heavy infestations, these pests can be a biologic vector of anaplasmosis, cattle tick fever and other problematic diseases. There are two general types of ticks: the hard-bodied ticks and the soft-bodied ticks. Hard-bodied ticks are the most problematic in livestock. Often the first sign of a tick problem is noted in the ears, with cupping and/or drooping ears. Lethargic and anemic animals are additional things to watch for.

Ticks go through three developmental stages after hatching from the egg. Juvenile stages climb onto vegetation and wait for a passing animal; often parasitizing rodents, rabbits, raccoons and other small animals. After engorging on blood, they drop to the ground and molt to the next stage or to lay eggs. Adult ticks also access larger animals, by climbing onto tall grass or shrubs.

The principal ticks on livestock in Kansas are the American dog tick which is found throughout the state, the lone star tick which is found mostly in eastern Kansas, and the Gulf Coast tick in south central and southeastern Kansas. Gulf Coast tick seems to be on the increase in our part of Kansas, especially as southern cattle have been moved north during drought.

Pasture management is vital to control of ticks and is the primary first step. Brush and weed control in a pasture helps eliminate resting areas for ticks. Burning and herbicide use can be important tools to manage the risk. Burned areas have fresh regrowth and attract the grazing animal into those areas, where tick numbers should be lower. Unburned areas still harbor large numbers of ticks such as woody draws and areas where brush, shrubs and ground litter prevail.

Producers need to understand that combating all external parasites during the summer months requires a multi-pronged approach. Many products are available on the market to help control pests. Each product is designed to work in a specific way, against certain targets, for a specified amount of time. This space doesn't allow to go into the specifics of each. Expectations of a product lasting from spring turn out until the first frost, or to completely eliminate the pests, is simply unrealistic.

There are a multitude of animal health products to help specifically control external parasites in grazing livestock. They can include insecticide impregnated ear tags, pour-ons, sprays, oilers or dusters, injectables, and products in feed. Specific to ticks, are livestock dips. A combination of these products is most commonly utilized to provide control. As with any animal health product, it is extremely important to read and follow all label directions for use.

Ticks are annoying to livestock and costly to animal performance. Timely management and appropriate use of insecticides will help minimize their impact. Producers should develop an integrated management plan to combat these pests. It is always best to consult with your herd health veterinarian do develop a strategy tailored for you specific region. K-State publication MF-2653 discusses ticks in more detail.

Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

Fraud Alert: COVID-19 Scams Still Going On

The COVID-19 emergency is over, but Medicare fraud is still happening in our area. Recently I have heard stories of scammers contacting people on the phone offering “free” COVID testing kits. The scammer often is charming to talk to and acts like they have a great deal of personal information about you. The caller ID display on your phone may look like they are calling from Medicare or a local phone number. The scammer then talks the beneficiary into giving out their Medicare number. The scammer can then bill for false claims on your behalf, including billing for services or medical equipment your doctor didn’t prescribe. Scammers defraud Medicare billions of dollars every year. This money is your tax dollars.

So what can you do to stop Medicare fraud?

- Contact your doctor if you believe you need to get tested for COVID-19, or make sure you visit an approved testing site.
- Only give your Medicare number to a trusted representative, such as your health care providers.
- Treat your Medicare number like your Social Security or credit card number. Do not provide it to anyone over the phone.
- Do not engage with anyone coming to your home and offering “free” COVID test kits or other durable medical equipment.
- Be cautious of unexpected calls, don’t be concerned about hanging up on the caller.
- Do not click on links with which you are unfamiliar; this could put your device at risk for viruses and malware.
- Be cautious when purchasing medical supplies; ensure you know the provider.
- Be wary of surveys that offer money, gifts, or free supplies in exchange for personal information.
- Carefully review your Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) when you receive it each quarter. Make sure the items billed to Medicare are correct.

What does Medicare currently cover, with the ending of the public health emergency on May 11, 2023? Medicare will continue to cover vaccines without any cost sharing. You may see cost-sharing for COVID-19 diagnostic tests. Medicare will not cover over-the-counter tests. Telehealth services will continue through December 31, 2024.

If you suspect that you have fallen victim to one of these scams, report the problem to your local Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) program to report the issue. Senior Medicare Patrol programs have volunteers and staff trained to help you work through the problem. They can answer your questions, listen to your concerns, and help with complaints. To locate your local SMP program, call 1-877-808-2468. Contact Teresa Hatfield at the Meadowlark Extension Office at 785-634-4125 or thatfield@ksu.edu in Jackson, Jefferson, and Nemaha counties.

Cindy Williams
District Extension Agent, Family & Community Wellness

Kansas 4-H State Fair Foods Rule Change

I have been getting 4-H food safety questions as members and leaders are thinking about food fair entries already. I just wanted to make sure all 4-H foods members were aware of a “new” state fair food rule that will be enforced at the Kansas State Fair this year. (NOTE: it may or may not be enforced at your local fair for this year.)

For food safety purposes, any entries with frostings or fillings must calculate the amount of sugar in the frosting/filling recipe ONLY. Calculation must be attached to entry, or the placing will be lowered one ribbon when judged. Frosting and fillings need to contain more than 65% sugar for safety. (The sugar ties up the moisture so it is less likely to grow bacteria.)

Examples on how to calculate this percentage are included in the publication located at:

<https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/MF3544.pdf>

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While the concept has been encouraged and taught in recent years, it has not been a required item or stated in the rules. It has been added to the 2023 4-H Kansas State Fair book. Because of the late notice and the fact that fair books were already printed, this rule is not being enforced at some local fair this year. We will continue to stress the importance of the safety of frostings and filling at all fairs and this new rule will be enforced at the 2023 Kansas State Fair in the 4-H Foods Division. Questions about this rule at the state fair can be directed towards Amy Sollock at asollock@ksu.edu or Karen Blakeslee at kblakesl@ksu.edu. Any questions about county fair foods rules can be directed to your local office or Cindy Williams, Meadowlark Extension District Agent at csw@ksu.edu .