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District Extension Agent, Crops & Soils

What to Expect from a Soybean Seed Treatment

A couple weeks ago, I started seeing posts about early planting of soybeans in my social media feed. Last week I started hearing about producers in Northeast Kansas itching to do the same. With temperatures reaching the point they did this last weekend – it's no wonder...

While arguments can be made for *and* against early planting, most agree getting a good stand is important. A soybean that emerges and begins to grow quickly generally tolerates disease/insect pressure better than one in cold, damp soils (if it survives – will it thrive?). Seed treatments are often used to help the seed weather those cooler, damper conditions, with good reason. With annual losses from soybean seedling diseases/seed rots estimated at around two bushels per acre, knowing what a seed treatment can/can't do makes good sense.

Start by considering what disease(s) you might see. Pythium, Rhizoctonia, and Fusarium are the primary suspects with field history and conditions post planting huge factors in whether we see issues. Knowing what disease to expect is the first step to having a plan to combat it.

Second, look at what is on the seed tag for treatments – both active ingredient *and* the level of treatment. For example, metalaxyl and mefenoxam are active against Pythium and Phytophthora, but not Fusarium or Rhizoctonia. Further, fields with a history of Phytophthora, for example, may require higher rates of seed treatment to be effective.

Knowledge of what to expect for the length of protection is important, too. Most seed treatments typically provide some level of protection against disease for approximately three weeks after planting (contact fungicides will have shorter residuals than systemic products). Conditions following emergence sometimes stretch this window a bit.

Despite the coverage a seed treatment provides, sometimes we still see issues. While soybeans are resilient from an emergence standpoint and forgiving from a stand standpoint, scouting is important, particularly on early planted fields with the potential for increased disease pressure. Other issues might be confused with disease and deserve attention, too. To help determine what it is, check out this reference from the Crop Protection Network (available via any District Office):

<https://cropprotectionnetwork.org/resources/publications/seedling-diseases> .

Ross Mosteller
District Extension Agent, Livestock & Natural Resources

Multi-Species Grazing

Mob, flerd, multi-specie are all terms used to describe the concept of grazing two or more species of animals in the same pasture/paddock at the same time. This is a practice that comes with some management, but also benefits. The economics of multi-specie grazing is a topic of discussion for the NE KS Sheep and Goat school being held, March 13 at the Northeast Kansas Heritage Complex south of Holton. I'd invite everyone interested to join us that evening, but here's an information primer from the University of Kentucky Master Grazer Program.

Grazing two or more animal species in a pasture-based system can increase forage utilization and efficiency. This method can also be used to renovate pastures by controlling certain forages, weeds, and brush that one livestock species may not graze. Each species of livestock is unique in the manner in which they graze and in what they prefer to graze. Knowing how different species graze, what they prefer, and possible obstacles is essential before deciding what will be effective on a particular farm.

Cattle, sheep, and goats are commonly used for multi-species grazing. The manner that these animals graze can differ significantly. Cattle are grazers that rely on forages that can be grabbed by the tongue to be pulled into the mouth and bitten off. Goats mainly graze at head height and above by standing on their back feet and are known as browsers. Sheep typically graze with their heads down but occasionally will graze at head height and above. Because of their split upper lip and smaller head, sheep typically graze closer to the ground than cattle and prefer to graze the smaller, more tender forages. Topography of a farm can create another possible advantage for adding sheep and/or goats to an operation because they are more adapted to grazing on steep terrain or rocky areas, while cattle prefer moderate slopes and flatter pastures. Sheep, goats, and cattle are capable of producing different marketable products, allowing one to diversify their income.

Grazing multiple species not only allows for increased stocking density and improved forage utilization, but can also decrease undesirable plant populations. Cattle usually graze the common grasses and legumes and leave less desirable forages such as weeds and forbs. Goats, on the other hand, prefer to browse woody brush, shrubs, forbs, and many problem weeds. Goats are also good for control of blackberries, multiflora rose, honeysuckle, and more. Sheep often choose to graze forbs over grasses and can be also used to control many weeds. Cattle will graze the taller grass that sheep may reject.

There are some potential obstacles to consider when adding another species to a grazing system. Different species may require different parasite control, fencing, mineral supplements, and management practices. Small ruminants are more susceptible to internal parasites, which will increase labor demand for management. Fencing modifications will likely have to be made if small ruminants are added to a cattle operation. While adult cattle can usually be contained using a one-wire temporary electric fence, sheep and goats will not be contained by one wire. It is suggested that woven wire or netted electric fencing be used to contain small ruminants

Predators are a greater problem when grazing small ruminants. Electric fencing is a useful tool to keep predators out. Having cattle in with smaller livestock may decrease the possibility of losing small livestock to predators. Having a guard dog, donkey, mule, or llama in the pasture can be effective at keeping predators out.

Supplying necessary minerals is another obstacle to consider. Sheep cannot tolerate the levels of copper that are required by cattle. There is a possibility of losing sheep if they are grazed with cattle and cattle mineral supplements are accessible by sheep. Using the leader-follower technique and moving minerals with each species can eliminate this problem. Knowing and providing the required minerals for each species is important.

Multi-species grazing can improve pasture utilization, increase pasture quality, increase the carrying capacity of the land, control weeds and brush, and may increase overall production and income of a farm. It is important to consider the benefits and possible obstacles of using this system.

Laura Phillips
District Extension Agent, Horticulture

Starting Lettuce and Peas

As spring gets closer, you might be thinking about starting cool season crops like peas and lettuce. These vegetables can be susceptible to freezing, but if planted too late the heat will reduce harvest. Here are some guidelines for getting your lettuce and peas to start growing.

Lettuce is susceptible to freeze damage, but is fairly cold tolerant, making it a great option for growing in a season extender such as a low tunnel or hoop house. There are many types of lettuce. Leafy varieties mature quickly and typically tolerate the heat better. Romaine has upright leaves with a strong mid-rib. Butterhead has a rounded shape and requires more time to mature. Head lettuce takes almost twice the amount of time to reach maturity compared to leafy lettuce. It is a better option for fall gardening.

Lettuce can be direct seeded or transplanted in mid-March through early April. That means, if you plan to grow transplants, now is a good time to get seeds started. Lettuce will germinate best with light and warmth. Soil that is too cold will slow germination. On the contrary, soil over 85 degrees F will prevent germination altogether. When seedlings have four to six true leaves they can be transplanted into the garden.

Peas can be direct seeded into the garden in early to mid-March as long as the soil is dry enough to work. Peas do not like having their roots disturbed, so they do not normally do well when started inside and transplanted later. If planting is delayed peas may not reach maturity before the heat arrives and stops production. Consider early maturing varieties with resistance to powdery mildew. Some varieties have vines that will grow up to five feet tall and require trellising. Dwarf varieties do not require staking.

If you are looking for more information on growing vegetables and fruits, you can find the Kansas Garden Guide available online from the K-State Bookstore. You can also contact your local extension office to purchase a hard copy.

Teresa Hatfield
District Extension Agent, Family and Community Wellness

Preparing for Kansas Severe Weather

With spring just around the corner, so is the potential for severe weather in Kansas. Severe Weather Preparedness Week is March 4-8, 2024. Now is the time to start thinking about what you will do if severe weather breaks out. For older adults and people with disabilities, planning is crucial. There are steps you can take to get ready.

In the spring in Kansas, we generally face the threat of severe thunderstorms, which can bring about high winds, hail, lightning, and even tornados. And even though the possibility of a tornado striking your home may seem remote, it is best to be prepared. My family has had some close encounters. My great aunt was hospitalized after a tornado hit her home in Oklahoma, and my husband's family lost their home several years ago in Topeka.

Because of these risks, you must stay informed about current or forecasted weather conditions. Consider getting a weather app for your phone or keeping up to date with a NOAA weather alert radio. Also, consider your shelter options in a severe thunderstorm or a tornado warning. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends the following suggestions in the event of a tornado:

- Go inside as quickly as possible. Bring any pets indoors.
- If you are in a manufactured or mobile home, Evacuate to the nearest shelter site. Go to a safe room, storm shelter, or sturdy building immediately. Manufactured structures such as mobile homes are unsafe during a tornado.
- Go to the basement or lowest level if you are in a 1- 2-story building. If you don't have a basement, take shelter on the first floor. Go to a small, interior, windowless room in a sturdy building on the lowest level of your home.
- Go to the basement or lowest level if you are in a multistory building. If you don't have a basement, take shelter on the first floor. Go to a small, interior, windowless room in a sturdy building on the lowest level.
- Take additional cover by shielding your head and neck with your arms and putting materials such as furniture and blankets around you.
- Cover your mouth with a cloth or mask to avoid breathing dust if trapped. Try to send a text, bang on a pipe or wall, or use a whistle instead of shouting. Take your go-bag and critical documents with you. Listen for current emergency information and instructions from authorities.

You will also need to devise an emergency kit that you can utilize if the power goes out or emergency help cannot get to you right away. Your kit will need to include items to sustain you until things return to normal. The website ready.gov provides a list of items that are usually included in an emergency kit. If you are an older adult or a person with a disability, consider any assistive devices (with extra batteries) or extra medication that you might need in an emergency.

Sometimes, communicating with friends or family is difficult after an emergency. Have a plan in place to let them know that you are okay. Have a backup means to get information, such as a small portable radio. Create a support network of people in your community who can assist you in an emergency. Share your emergency plan with your support network. Also, consider giving someone you trust an extra key to your home.

These steps allow you to be fully prepared for severe weather this spring. For more information on emergency preparedness, visit www.ready.gov.

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Cindy Williams
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No news article this week.