

# Maryland Extension Service Looks at Blight and Future

**Editor's note:** Despite assurances from many quarters that all U. S. corn should be of the N type which is resistant to Southern corn blight by next year, debate will certainly continue on the blight and the lessons to be gained from it, as well on what actually happened during the past two years. This is one such appraisal from the Maryland Extension Service.

It's all over but the harvesting in Maryland agriculture's 1971 bout with Race T and other forms of Southern corn leaf blight. Commercial aerial spray ap-

plicators have moved into states farther north, and the time for realistically assessing next year's prospects is at hand.

Latest information from Extension agronomists and plant pathologists at the University of Maryland indicates these salient points through the haze of spore dust sure to envelop many cornfields at harvest time.

—Some small hybrid seed corn companies which gambled everything on Texas male-sterile corn in the hope that spores from last year's infestation would not overwinter face economic ruin or loss of prestige. Their gloomy prospect is shared by most Maryland farmers who planted T corn.

—Planting blends of T and N corn proved to be a mistake in most cases. The T corn in such fields is already dried out and needs immediate harvesting, while N corn in the same fields is still mostly green.

—Some farmers who purchased what they were led to believe was blight-resistant N seed now find fields completely brown, a dead giveaway that it was really nonresistant T seed.

—Fields of T corn with five applications of spray were saved from blight. But current market prices for corn make the cost of this much spraying not economically feasible.

—Damage from corn borers and Northern corn leaf blight, although not as serious in yield reduction potential, have compounded the Southern corn leaf blight harvest problem. Northern corn leaf blight was especially noticeable in central Maryland. This fungus-borne disease attacks both T and some varieties of N, or normal cytoplasm corn.

—Contrary to expectations, there was more blight-resistant N

seed corn available for late plantings than there was early in the season. This fact, coupled with early August rains which came too late for some drought-stricken early-planted corn, makes late-planted fields generally look very promising.

Joseph L. Newcomer, University of Maryland Extension agronomist, speculated that the late-season N seed corn which showed up in Maryland came partly from South America but largely from left-over dealer warehouse stocks in the South where commercial hybrid seed companies, by general

agreement, had concentrated their N seed lots at the beginning of the 1971 planting season.

Newcomer commented that the South American flint corn appears to have done much better than most professional observers expected. One farmer in Howard County alone planted 30 acres of such corn, and it was doing well at last report. One question remains to be resolved in the seed trade, noted Dr. Omar D. Morgan, corn blight liaison officer at the University of Maryland. That is whether the N, T and B designations for seed corn will be continued next year.

At least one large hybrid seed corn company has already publicly announced it will sell nothing but N seed for 1972 plantings.

"It appears that this is the proper direction; Southern corn leaf blight is here to stay, and we'll have to learn to live with it," agreed his co-worker, Dr. Leslie O. Weaver, state plant pathologist.

Dr. Weaver speculated that the Middle Atlantic region, including Maryland, may well turn out to be the area with most severe damage from Southern corn leaf blight in 1971.

## Grange Plans for Large Turnout at Convention

With over one-third of a 60,000 total membership located within easy driving distance, the Pennsylvania State Grange may register an all-time high attendance at its 99th annual convention in Somerset, October 25 to 28, A. Wayne Readinger, master, recently.

Masters and their spouses from the 621 subordinate granges in 65 of the 67 counties will serve as official delegates. Attending with them will be men and women guests, including fellow subordinate officers, officials from the state's 56 pomona districts, state officers and committees, junior members, convention speakers, representatives of various supporting agencies and organizations within the community, and key figures from kindred farm and other related groups.

Readinger said attendance at recent state meetings has averaged near 2,000. He expressed confidence this year's roll may equal or exceed the best previous mark.

Many delegations will travel from distant points by bus although large numbers will be commuting from their homes daily by private automobile, he indicated.

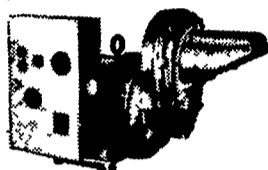
Glen Handwork, Somerset RD5, county pomona master and general chairman of arrangements, said all leading hostleries, mostly motels, will be booked to capacity although he expected housing facilities will be adequate.

Dining facilities, he admitted

may be taxed, but special arrangements were going ahead for setting up kitchens in churches to take care of the overflow. These plans were in answer to one motel operator who, when told the size of the expected crowds, asked seriously, "will they bring their own food?"

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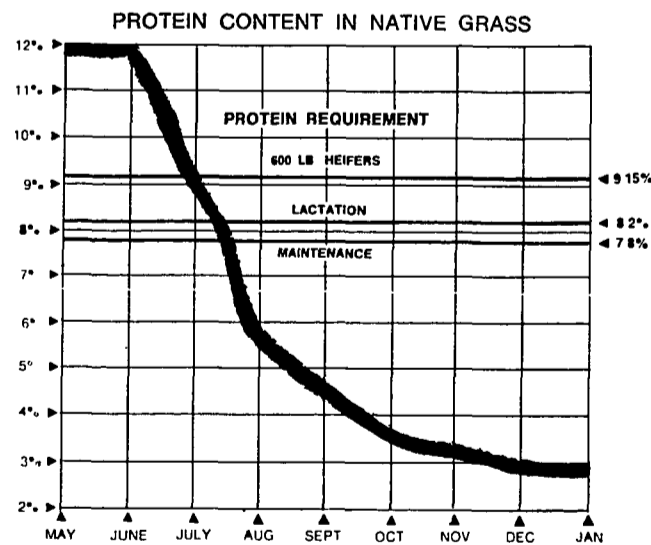
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