

Rainfall, leaf diseases blamed for down corn

GEORGETOWN, Del. — There are a number of reasons for the problem of down corn many farmers faced as we approached harvest season, according to Delaware extension crops specialist Frank Webb. By looking into the causes of the past season's problem now, farmers can plan changes in production practices and varieties to reduce the problem in 1980.

A major contributing factor was the large amount of rainfall we experienced throughout the season. This resulted in some of the most severe nitrogen deficiency symptoms Webb has ever seen on corn.

Tissue formation was affected and plants were less sturdy than usual. Though this problem occurred on various farms all over the state, the lighter soils of lower Kent and Sussex counties were particularly hard-hit.

Some farmers caught the problem earlier in the

season and applied supplemental nitrogen. In some cases this special attention was enough to prevent lodging. For next year, therefore, Webb suggests that an automatic late-season sidedress application of nitrogen could prove beneficial for those who are growing corn on light, sandy soils.

Another major factor was the incidence of leaf diseases, which devastated much of the green foliage on many varieties of corn in late August and September.

The three diseases that caused the most problems in 1979 were northern corn leaf blight; southern corn leaf blight; race O; and anthracnose.

All are familiar diseases, each causing a greater or lesser amount of damage every year depending on such factors as the weather, the lushness of the corn, and the number of disease spores present. Unfortunately,

conditions were such that 1979 was a peak year for destruction by all three diseases.

These diseases cause the premature death of the corn foliage. Affected corn cannot mature properly. The ear moisture is still much greater than normal at the time the plant is desiccated or appears to reach maturity.

Such corn may look like it's drying down in readiness for harvest; however, what we're seeing is not natural maturation. It's the disease that's killing the leaf tissue and drying the plant down, Webb said.

When this happens, the stalk must stand for a longer time to allow the ear to dry down, providing the opportunity for many other diseases to enter the plant. Various types of stalk rot weaken the plant so much that the least amount of wind or adverse weather could cause lodging.

Several other factors contribute to the problem of down corn. Continuous corn in a field can result in root problems or increased incidence of disease, either of which could contribute to the lodging problem, he said.

A fertility imbalance in the soil could also be the culprit.

A large amount of potash in relation to nitrogen can cause serious lodging, so it's important to have the soil tested and pay attention to the fertility balance.

Plant population can also be a factor. Generally speaking, the denser the plant population, the smaller the stalks, creating thinner rinds and less sturdy plants. Therefore, plants ordinarily won't stand quite as well at higher populations.

Insects, too, can weaken plant stalks in many instances. Insect damage probably contributed to the lodging problem in some parts of the state.

Hurricane David caused a great deal of lodging damage. However, some of the damage attributed to the hurricane was not really due to the storm itself, but to other factors that caused premature plant death or weakened stalks so that the plants were unable to withstand adverse weather.

Certain hybrids show more resistance to lodging than others. Therefore, farmers should look into University field trial results before selecting varieties for next year, the specialist recommends. Such efforts should help prevent lodging problems in 1980.

Farm Talk

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thriving enterprise throughout the peninsula. There are a few beef cattle, virtually no sheep, and a few poultrymen produce eggs.

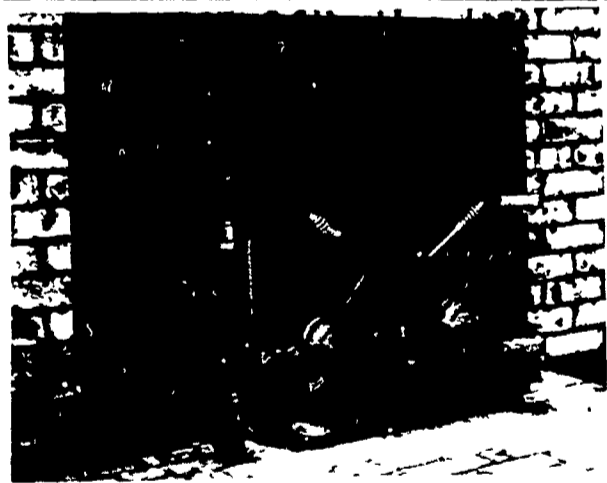
But looking at the area's farm income figures, it becomes quite apparent that broilers, corn and soybeans are our agricultural base. All the rest, including vegetables crops, specialty crops, a variety of livestock enterprises, just add to an already impressive agricultural success story.

But picture the Delmarva peninsula without its broiler industry and you get a

feeling of what economist Doving is talking about when he says that if the proportions of crop farming and animal husbandry had remained as they were in the early 1950's, Illinois's share of the annual national product would be about 300 million dollars greater than it is today.

He's not blaming individual farmers, for he feels they must do what's best for them, but he says public officials must take a long look at the situation and formulate policies that favor a more diversified economy.

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1979 Polled Hereford Show Winnings

Junior Champion Bull	Virginia State Fair
Reserve Grand Champion	Delaware State Fair
Reserve Grand Champion Heifer	Pennsylvania Farm Show
Reserve Junior Champion	Maryland State Fair
Grand Champion Heifer	Shippensburg Fair
Grand Champion Bull	Cumberland Fair
Reserve Grand Champion Heifer	Maryland State Fair
Reserve Junior Champion Heifer	Pennsylvania Farm Show
Reserve Bull Calf Champion	Maryland Polled Hereford Assoc
Grand Champion Heifer	Summer Show
Reserve Grand Champion Heifer	Cumberland Fair
Grand Champion Heifer	Eastern National Livestock Exhibition
Heifer Calf Champion	Keystone International Livestock Exhibition
Heifer Calf Champion	York Fair
Best Six Head	Pennsylvania Polled Hereford Assoc
Reserve Grand Champion Heifer	Summer Show
2nd Best Steer	York Fair
2nd Best Six Head	Cumberland Fair
Reserve Junior Champion Bull	Maryland Polled Hereford Assoc Fall Sale
Grand Champion Heifer	Keystone International Livestock Exhibition
Grand Champion Bull	Maryland State Fair
	Delaware State Fair
	York Fair

1979 Polled Hereford Show Winnings (Cont)

Reserve Grand Champion Heifer	South Mountain Fair
Reserve Junior Champion Heifer	Virginia State Fair
Reserve Grand Champion Heifer	Delaware State Fair
Reserve Heifer Calf Champion	Pennsylvania Farm Show
Grand Champion Heifer	York Fair
Reserve Grand Champion Bull	Cumberland Fair
Reserve Grand Champion Heifer	Pennsylvania Polled Hereford Assoc
Premier Breeder	Summer Show
Junior Champion Heifer	Shippensburg Fair
Junior Champion Heifer	Eastern National Livestock Exhibition
Junior Champion Heifer	York Fair
Champion Steer	Keystone International Livestock Exhibition
Champion Steer	New York Hereford Assoc Fall Sale
Best Six Head	4th Annual Freedom of Choice Calf Sale
	New York Hereford Assoc Fall Sale
	Cumberland Fair

1979 Shropshire Sheep Winnings

Grand Champion Ewe	South Mountain Fair
Grand Champion Ram	Bedford Fair
Champion Get of Sire	Montgomery County (Gaithersburg) Fair
Grand Champion Ram	Carlisle Fair
Grand Champion Ram	Shippensburg Fair
Champion Get of Sire	Shippensburg Fair
Grand Champion Ewe	Bedford Fair
Reserve Grand Champion Ewe	Eastern National Livestock Exhibition
Best Pair of Ewe Lambs	Montgomery County (Gaithersburg) Fair
Reserve Grand Champion Ewe	South Mountain Fair
Grand Champion Ewe	Bedford Fair
Reserve Grand Champion Ewe	Carlisle Fair
Champion Get of Sire	Bedford Fair
Reserve Grand Champion Ewe	Carlisle Fair
Reserve Grand Champion Ewe	Bedford Fair
Best Pair of Ewe Lambs	Shippensburg Fair
	Montgomery County (Gaithersburg) Fair

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