

What affects corn kernel numbers?

DEKALB, Ill. — By the time corn plants are shoulder high they've formed all the potential kernel sites they'll ever have, claims Wayne Fowler, Agronomic Education Director for DEKALB.

"Management for high yield strives to maintain, first, high kernel survival and, second, full 'fill' of the survivors," states Fowler. "After all, grain yield is the product of how many kernels end up in the bin and how much each one weighs."

Considering everything that's necessary for a plant to live and reproduce successfully, it's a wonder it works so well.

The products of photosynthesis have to be moved about in the plant, destroyed and reformed—in some cases several times—to form roots, stalks, leaves, cobs, husks, silks, pollen, and (finally) grain. The process has to be maintained for 120 to 140 days in order to develop kernels to the maximum weight.

Timing of events in relation to plant development is very important. An early planted field might be adversely affected by early drought while a later planted field of the same hybrid escapes because rains came.

Conversely, the early field might be far enough advanced to be little affected by a stress condition that proves to be severe to a later field with younger plants. Two hybrids planted the same day and growing under the same conditions are not necessarily in exactly the same stage of development at any given time.

The nature of kernel development on an individual ear is that those toward the tip are the last to develop, hence the youngest. Plant stress will cause abortion of kernels at the ear tip, starting with the very youngest. The more severe or long lasting the stress, the greater number of aborted kernels.

This abortion of young kernels

occurs because plants have been unable to translocate sufficient products of photosynthesis to the ear. There are many reasons why this may occur, including nutrient availability, soil pH, soil moisture, temperature, light and others.

A final comment of Fowler's that may be pertinent this fall in areas where growing conditions have been favorable: there may be some concern about unexpected "poor tip fill." "This may simply be due to continued cob growth and

elongation after pollen shed was complete. These unfilled "snouts" never had potential kernels. Look at the ear that's there and ignore the snout. It will dry up and waste away by harvest time," he concludes.

Store pesticides properly

NEWARK, Del. — As cold weather heads this way, the season for pesticide use is over for most people. Leftover pesticides should be stored properly so they'll present no hazards and will be fit for use next season. Improperly stored pesticides can contaminate animals, food, feed, or fertilizers.

Be sure each pesticide container has a proper label before you store it, says John McDaniel, Extension pesticide specialist. Reading this label is the only safe way to know which pesticide is in the container. It carries the precautions and

directions needed to use the product properly.

Do not store leaky containers, and be sure all caps are tightened securely. Weed killers should not be stored near other pesticides or fertilizers. Vapors escaping from them may be absorbed by other pesticides or fertilizers and damage next year's plants when the contaminated pesticide is used.

The storage area should be cool, dry, and secure. The ideal storage place is a locked room or cabinet, safely out of reach of children and other non-suspecting people and

animals. Certain pesticides should not be stored where the temperature is apt to drop below 40 degrees Fahrenheit, points out McDaniel. Below this point some pesticide products separate and cannot be mixed. Excessive heat can cause other pesticides to decompose.

After the pesticides are carefully put away for the winter, prepare the sprayer for storage. For power equipment follow the manufacturer's suggestions. A hand sprayer should be rinsed inside and out, and sprayed through with clear water. Oil the leathers in the pump and store in a dry, airy place with the pump out of the tank. This encourages rapid drying to prevent rust.



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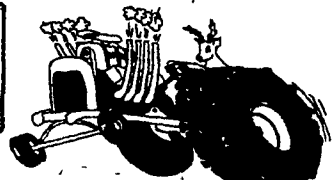
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