

Spindle streak virus affecting wheat

NEWARK, DEL. — The unusual, all too common occurrence of wheat spindle streak mosaic virus this spring has many area wheat growers wondering what to do about the disease next year.

"This is the first time we have positively identified the disease in Delaware," says University of Delaware extension plant

pathologist Bob Mulrooney, "Since infection takes place soon after wheat becomes established in the fall, by the time symptoms appear the following spring, nothing can be done to control the disease on the current crop."

The virus is transmitted to wheat by a soil fungus called *Polymyxa graminis*. The fungus produces

spores which attack wheat through plant roots. Soils containing virus-infected fungus can produce virus-infected wheat any time a susceptible variety is grown, Mulrooney says. The long cool, wet spring weather has been very favorable for infection and symptom development.

"At present, we don't know how

much yield loss will result from wheat spindle streak mosaic virus. My guess is it will be under 10 percent," he says.

Growers should check their wheat now to determine if it has the virus. Infected wheat will have yellow-green mottled dashes and streaks on the newest leaves. The streaks parallel leaf veins and

sometimes taper at both ends like spindles—hence the name of the disease. Streaks can range from 1/2- to 3/4-inch long and are 1/8-inch or less wide.

Plants infected early in the fall will be mildly stunted and most of the field may be involved. Early spring symptoms include some stunting, yellowing of lower leaves and streaked foliage in the upper part of plants. Some symptoms resemble those resulting from poor fertility conditions. Later the leaf spots may resemble powdery mildew infection, but will lack the white cottony mold growth associated with that disease.

"So far, my own observations and those from surrounding states indicate that susceptible wheat varieties include McNair 1003, Potomac, Hunter, Arthur 71, Coker 762, and Severn," Mulrooney says. "Varieties with no streaking have been Tyler, Hart, Pioneer 2550, Massey, and Feland. By season's end we should have a good idea which varieties are resistant for use where wheat spindle streak mosaic virus has occurred."

Besides using resistant varieties, another excellent control would be to plant no wheat at all in infested fields.



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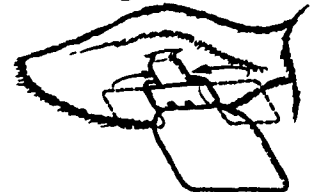
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