

# Pests may affect Del. soybeans

NEWARK, Del. — When soil moisture and temperature are adequate for seed germination and growth, soybean plants can tolerate a lot of seedling injury. Farmers are wondering whether this will hold true this season.

"In many cases," says University of Delaware extension pest management specialist Joanne Whalen, "seed germination and quality have already been reduced by last summer's drought. Insect and disease injury to germinating seeds could further reduce plant stands."

What's the likelihood of that happening this spring?

According to Whalen, the increase in full season no-till soybean acreage on Delmarva has been accompanied by increased seed corn maggot and black cutworm seedling injury. Seed corn maggot larvae begin feeding on soybeans in late May, and cause the most damage to soybeans planted in cool, wet soil that's high in organic matter. Cool weather

delays germination and makes the seed susceptible to attack for longer periods.

If cool, wet conditions persist through planting this spring, she recommends growers use a seed treatment containing Diazinon or Diazinon plus Lindane for maggot control. These treatments cost less than a dollar per acre and will also help suppress other seed-attacking insects such as wireworms.

"Black cutworm outbreaks are most likely to occur in low, poorly drained areas and in no-till fields," the specialist warns. "Start scouting for cutworm damage as soon as plants emerge. Base treatment decisions on a random sample of 20 consecutive plants in five locations throughout a field. We recommend an insecticide treatment when 30 percent or more of the plants are damaged and live larvae can still be found."

White grub and wireworm feeding may also cause stand reductions. These insects won't

build up to economic levels in one year, Whalen says, so use a soil insecticide only if wireworms or grubs were a problem in the same field last year.

To reduce potential disease problems in soybeans this year, Delaware extension plant pathologist Bob Mulrooney recommends farmers use a fungicide seed treatment. These treatments can help increase plant stands in a wet spring like this by reducing seed-borne diseases and protecting seeds against decay and blight.

He recommends treating poor quality seed if fungi have reduced germination to below 80 percent. Fungicides won't improve poor germination caused by mechanical damage or improper storage, but in most cases Mulrooney encourages growers to treat low quality seed if high quality seed is not available. Research has shown that fungicides generally increase stands of poor quality seed, but don't always ensure higher yields. Yield increases will occur only if the seed treatment prevents frequent skips of 6 inches or more between plants in a row.

Delaware residents who want further information on in-season pest activity can call the University of Delaware's crop pest hotline, 1-800-345-7544.

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(Continued from Page D26)

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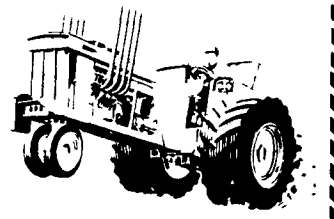
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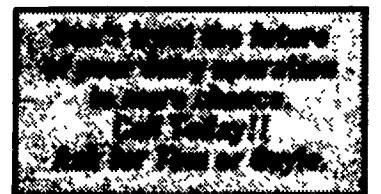
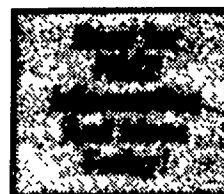
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