

Scout alfalfa now for leafhoppers

NEWARK, Del. — Though potato leafhoppers aren't usually a problem on the first cutting of alfalfa, this insect can severely damage new spring seedlings and the regrowth of second and third cuttings.

According to University of Delaware extension pest management specialist Joanne Whalen, leafhoppers can stunt plants, reduce yields, reduce quality and destroy new stands and regrowth. So growers should check for this insect soon after harvesting their first cutting. Because it can move quickly from field to field, weekly sampling is extremely important.

Both adult and immature leafhoppers attack alfalfa, Whalen says. However, immature forms cause the most severe damage. Their feeding produces yellow wedge-shaped areas, called "hopper burn," on leaf tips. Heavy infestations will cause an entire field to appear yellow.

"Be sure you don't confuse leafhopper damage with boron deficiency," the specialist cautions. "That will show up on the newest leaves while leafhopper injury occurs on older leaves."

If summer weather conditions are a repeat of last year's, farmers can expect to see large leafhopper populations in many fields. The insect can develop from egg to adult stage in only three weeks when the weather is warm. Severe

damage is most likely to occur from mid-June through late August.

"Scout alfalfa fields for leafhoppers shortly after your first cutting and continue checking weekly until the final cutting," Whalen advises. Base treatment decisions on a random sample of 20

Stem — Length	Number of Leafhoppers/Sweep
3 inches less	0.2
6 inches	0.5
8-10 inches	1.0
12-14 inches	2.0

Remember, the most severe damage will occur on the first six inches of regrowth so early detection is important. When alfalfa is more than 12 inches tall, the plants can tolerate more feeding without suffering significant economic loss.

"Growers often ask if alfalfa more than a foot tall should be sprayed or harvested when they find threshold levels of leafhoppers," Whalen says. "In general, if the threshold is reached and less than 50 percent of the plants are in bud, it will pay to spray immediately. However, if the alfalfa is 60 percent or more in bud and you can harvest within the next week, we recommend harvesting the field instead of spraying."

Good insect control and mowing

sweeps taken in five locations throughout the field. Since the decision to treat is also based on plant height, collect six stems from the same five areas and measure each stem from base to growing tip. Then use the following guidelines in deciding whether or not to spray:

practices can help minimize disease losses in alfalfa, says Delaware extension plant pathologist Bob Mulrooney. He recommends timely insecticide applications to help reduce plant stress. When their tops are actively growing, plants can produce vigorous roots able to resist root rot.

When leaf spots are present, Mulrooney encourages growers to mow earlier than normal. This will help reduce leaf drop and thus conserve feed value. One form of leaf spot called "pepper spot" is present in many alfalfa fields now. Severe infestations usually occur when plants are rapidly growing and weather is cool and wet.

Pepper spot initially appears as small black spots on the youngest

leaves. The spots gradually enlarge to 1/8-inch in size. They have tan centers and dark brown borders. Mulrooney advises growers to check fields now for pepper spot and mow early if infestations are severe.

Delaware farmers who want further information on in-season pest activity can call the University of Delaware's crop pest hotline, 1-800-345-7544. Now that the growing season is under way, reports are updated on Tuesdays and Fridays by noon.

Pa. grain stocks down

HARRISBURG — Corn, oats, wheat and barley stocks in Pennsylvania on June 1 totaled 36.8 million bushels, down 37 percent from a year ago, according to the Pennsylvania Crop and Livestock Reporting Service.

Stocks on farms, at 30.8 million bushels, were down 40 percent and off-farm stocks at 6 million bushels were down 16 percent from a year earlier.

Corn stored in all positions totaled 29.6 million bushels, down 42 percent from last year's level of 50.8 million bushels. Oats held in all positions totaled 4.6 million bushels, down 10 percent from the 5.2 million bushels on hand a year earlier. Wheat stocks in all positions totaled 2 million bushels, down 11 percent from last year's level of 2.3 million bushels.

Barley in all storage positions, at

600,000 bushels, increased 12 percent from the 534,000 bushels stored last year. On-farm soybean stocks totaled 522,000 bushels, down 27 percent from last year's farm stocks of 711,000 bushels.

U.S. corn stocks in all positions on June 1 totaled 2.14 billion bushels, 57 percent less than last year's record high of 4.92 billion bushels. Oats in all positions totaled 181 million bushels, down 18 percent from a year ago. Barley stored in all positions totaled 189 million bushels, 13 percent less than last year's 217 million bushels.

All wheat stored in all positions totaled 1.39 billion bushels, eight percent less than last year's 1.52 billion bushels. Soybeans in all positions totaled 456 million bushels, down 42 percent from a year ago and 29 percent less than 1982.

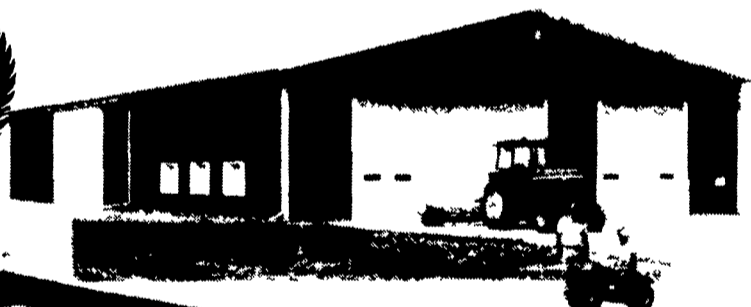
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