Insect Problems Can Be Managed Effectively

DEKALB, Ill. — Each season insects cause major damage to corn fields. But farmers have several ways to prepare their crops for these yield-robbing culprits, said **DEKALB** Plant Genetics regional agronomist Larry Martin.

"A farmer needs to review his tillage practices, crop rotations and the weather that occurred the previous year and maybe during the present crop season," he said.

Martin also suggests examining last year's scouting records which may reveal insect populations. Those numbers may give growers a guideline about what to expect. during the current year.

"If the number of insects was high last season, it could be high again this year," the DEKALB agronomist said.

Martin says farmers have several management techniques they can implement to reduce insect damage.

"Scouting could be done on a daily or weekly basis to monitor insect populations," he said. "This will tell a grower whether the problem will be detrimental to the profit line of the operation." Crop and ullage rotation also may help reduce insect infestations.

Martin advises growers to become familiar with situations favoring insect damage. Seedcorn maggots and seedcorn beetles attack when germination is delayed by cool, wet soil after planting. The agronomist suggests growers use diazinon and Lindane planter-box treatments to protect the seed before germination. This

treatment also protects against light wireworm populations, he says.

In continuous corn, rootworm infestations can be moderate to severe. Martin recommends applying a soil insecticide at planting unless scouting last summer revealed average rootworm beetle populations below .75 per plant. This threshold drops to .5 per plant in first-year corn.

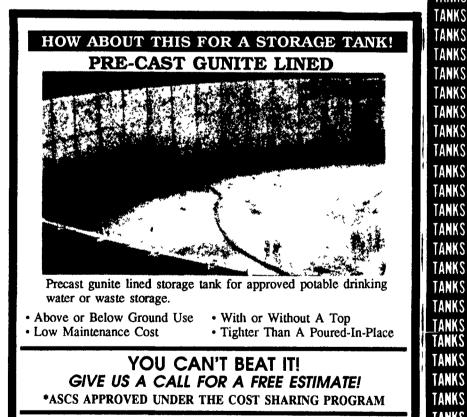
When corn follows soybeans, the potential for rootworm problems is low.

"Exceptions are if the previous soybean crop was very weedy or had 5,000 or more volunteer corn plants per acre, or if northern corn rootworms survive two seasons in your area," Martin said, "In the letter case, an insecticide application may be necessary.'

Corn planted after pasture or grass sod may suffer stand loss to wireworms, grubs, sod webworm, corn billbug and cutworms. Early spring baiting may help determine the degree of wireworm threat. Scouting will determine cutworm problems.

"Plan to use a rescue treatment if 3 percent of the plants have been cut off and remaining cutworms are less than 3/4 inches long," Martin said.

Weather conditions during egglaying will determine the severity of European corn borer damage. Corn leaf aphids, chinch bugs, and spider mites are most active when it is hot and dry, but there is no way to predict severity in advance, Martin said.



Early Planting Results In High Yields

DEKALB, Ill. — Planting early not only increases yield potential but also helps growers improve cropping efficiency.

"It has been well documented that delayed planting of corn results in significant yield reduction," said Larry Martin, regional agronomist for DEKALB Plant Genetics.

Early planting encourages root development, which helps seedlings take advantage of high nutrient concentrations in the soil, he said. In addition, it maximizes efficient use of spring soil moisture which leads to earlier development of a plant canopy to shade the soil and reduce evaporation.

Pollination may also improve because critical silking and tasselling stages may be reached before subsoil moisture is exhausted, the DEKALB agronomist says. Early pollination can increase grain formation, improve yields and produce higher test weights at harvest.

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Martin also says early planting requires growers to consider some special hybrid characteristics.

"We may want to choose hybrids that are better able to take higher populations," he said. "Some hybrids have less of a flextype ear and need higher population for ultimate yields. Other hybrids have more of a flex-type ear so can stand lower populations."

Martin says farmers who plant early will want to increase that population because of cool soil.

"If the weather warms up enough so that all those plants germinate, then the grower will have a higher population in the fall to harvest," he said. "So it's important the farmer plants a hybrid that performs and yields well in high populations."

Analysis of more than 5,000

DEKALB Field Analysis Comparison Trial (FACT) plots indicates the highest yields are from corn planted between April 30 and May 6 in the northern tier of states. In the southern Corn Belt, the optimum time to plant is around April 27, and in the mid-South April 5.

Martin suggests the following management tips for early planted com:

• Aim for the high end of plant populations.

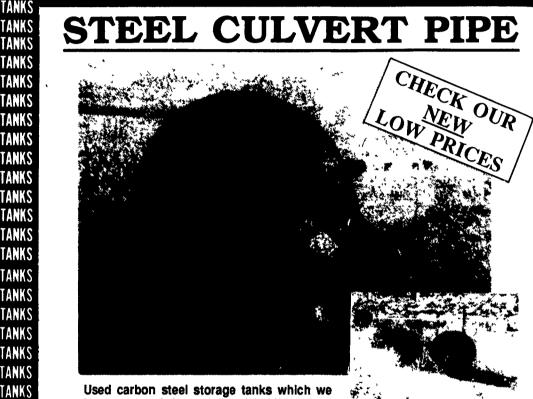
 Choose hybrids with high germination rates under cold conditions.

· Band starter fertilizer.

• Place seed no more than 1-1/2 inches deep.

• Manage weed control early. Avoid planting in soils that are too wet.





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