



CORN TALK

PENNSYLVANIA MASTER CORN GROWERS ASSOC., INC.

Corn Talk, Lancaster Farming, Saturday, October 12, 1996

Burcucumber Busts Out In Pa. Corn Fields

ANDY ANDREWS

Lancaster Farming Staff

LANDISVILLE (Lancaster Co.) —

Burcucumber — also known as “wild pickle” — has been “exploding” in many Pennsylvania corn fields, said a Penn State weed specialist.

According to Dr. Bill Curran, Penn State associate professor of weed science, the cumbersome weed can cause heavy damage in corn and soybean fields with potential significant loss of yields.

To make matters worse, the weed is extremely difficult and can be expensive to control. However, the alternatives of using no control or not changing control strategies could prove catastrophic for corn growers.

Curran said the vine-type weed, which looks just like a cucumber plant with broad, five-sided leaves, can branch out through fields of corn and soybeans for great distances. The plants can choke off corn stalks and envelope soybean stands quickly if left untreated.

Worse, the plant produces clusters of seed with 16-20 seeds per cluster. “There could be hundreds of clusters on a plant,” Curran said.

In one field near the Penn State Southeastern Field Research and Extension Center, Curran recently counted 14 clusters of seed on four feet of vine. “That’s about 250 seeds in four feet alone,” he said. Vines can spread 30-40 feet in a season, choking off corn stalks and soybean plants and significantly reducing yield.

A single plant per season can bear up to 10,000 seeds per plant. The seeds can

overwinter. In addition, the clusters can attach themselves readily to clothing or fur cover and can be spread easily by rodents or man.

“This is a bottom-ground, wet and heavy soil type of vine weed,” said Curran. But in a growing season that was as continuously wet as this past one, any type of field could fall victim. Growers realized, according to the weed specialist, that “no herbicides provided residual control good enough to control the weed all season long.”

The problem is made worse by the fact that the vines and seeds pose real hazards at harvest.

“Burcucumber clogs up combines, wraps up in the reels, and clogs up silage choppers,” said Curran.

The seed, when it germinates, is very competitive, can reduce yield on crops significantly, and spreads quickly.

Some fields can get so infested with the weed that they simply cannot be chopped for silage or combined.

For corn fields that are past treatment and to be used for silage, there is hope: preliminary research by Curran shows that ensiling kills the seed germination. So when a field is chopped, many of the seeds are taken off and the ensiling process appears to kill the seed.

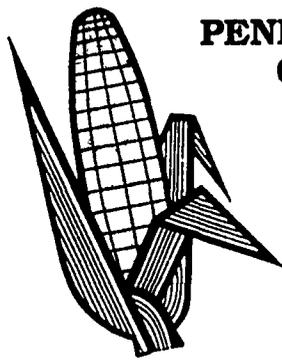
Some strategies that growers can use if the fields are heavily infested with burcucumber are:

- Designate fields previously in shelled or high moisture corn to be used as silage

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Dr. Bill Curran, Penn State weed specialist, holds up the vine that’s a real threat to corn fields — burcucumber, also called “wild pickle.” The weed has been “exploding” in many Pennsylvania corn fields, he said.



PENNSYLVANIA MASTER CORN GROWERS ASSOCIATION

Between The Rows

Dr. Greg Roth
Penn State Agronomy
Associate Professor



A STRANGE BUT GENERALLY GOOD YEAR

Another growing season is passing by and I have to conclude that it was another unusual one in many ways.

Unusual weather seems to be the norm these days rather than the exception. As one of my colleagues, Lynn Hoffman, often puts it: This year we had our 25th abnormal season in a row here at Rockspring.

Lynn’s probably right that, in the long run, there is no such thing as an average year.

On the other hand, many meteorologists have noted that weather variations and crop production recently have become more extreme, so we need to learn to manage around weather like this.

Some of the weather extremes encountered this year were cool temperatures during the middle of May followed by high temperatures in late May (96 degrees in Williamsport on 5/19), heavy precipitation in July and in some areas, exceptionally heavy precipitation in September.

The early season weather delayed planting for many growers around the state and this continues to have implications on yield and maturity this fall.

Many of these later planted fields are showing poor tip fill that is characteristic of late planted or exceptionally long season hybrids. The cool wet conditions in May also contributed to less than ideal stands in some areas.

In some cases, these stand reductions were related to seed quality problems. In other cases, deeper planting, planting in wet soils and the hot, 90-degree temperatures that occurred in late May contributed to more than the usual number of cases of soil crusting this spring.

I saw several examples of fields planted one day that had a stand problem and adjacent fields planted two days later that were just fine. Several of these wet planted fields not only had a stand problem but they also lagged in development all season.

The take-home message from these fields is that if soil conditions are not right, it is usually better to wait the extra day or two until they dry out.

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Producers Try Narrow Row Corn

ANDY ANDREWS
Lancaster Farming Staff
HOLTWOOD (Lancaster Co.) — What do dairy farmers in western New York know that some Pennsylvania dairy farmers don’t?

For one thing, New York producers have tried narrow row corn with success. For another, they’ve been so successful with it that there are between 5,000-10,000 acres

planted this year, according to Greg Roth, Penn State associate professor and corn expert.

Roth spoke to about 100 producers and agri-industry representatives at a no-till field day at Steve and Cheri Groff’s farm near Holtwood in July.

Narrow row corn can be viable in Pennsylvania, even in southeastern counties. According to Roth, diverse farm opera-

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CORN TALK

Farm Calendar

- Tuesday, October 22
Solanco Young Farmers Silage Com-Management meeting, Solanco High School, 7 p.m.
- Thursday, November 14
Ag Service School, Meadville.
- Friday, November 15
Ag Service School, Clearfield.
- Tuesday, November 19
Solanco Young Farmers Corn

- Grain Management meeting, Solanco High School, 7 p.m.
- Mid-Atlantic Crop Management School, Dover, Del., thru Nov. 21.
- Wednesday, November 20
Quality Forage Conference, Tunkhannock.

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