

Herbicide-Resistant Weed May Invade Crops

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Field crop producers and landscapers across Pennsylvania should be vigilant for a new strain of super-weed threatening to gain a foothold in the state, according to an agronomist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

William Curran, professor of weed science and extension specialist for Penn State Cooperative Extension, has warned that surrounding states have been wrestling with a variety of the common annual weed known as "horseweed" or "marestail." This variety, he said, is showing resistance to glyphosate, the active ingredient in many popular herbicides.

"Horseweed is very common in the Northeast — it's actually a native species in Pennsylvania," Curran said. "It's mostly a problem along roadsides and areas that aren't tilled. Glyphosate is

the active ingredient in Roundup, TouchDown, Glypho-Max and more — it's the primary product used to kill emerging weeds at planting time. If a weed is resistant to glyphosate, it's a huge threat not only to soybeans but to all crops grown with no-till planting techniques."

In 2000, glyphosate-resistant strains of the weed were identified in a few isolated fields on Maryland's Eastern Shore. By 2001, it had moved into about 30 fields. By 2002, it was in many no-till soybean fields in Delaware. It since has been identified in New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, Ohio, Tennessee, southern Kentucky and possibly as far west as Missouri.

"This year, we're really concerned about this weed getting a foothold in Pennsylvania," Curran said. "It could become an annual summer problem not just for corn and soybean growers, but

also for the landscaping industry, where glyphosate-based herbicides are used frequently to kill weeds among bedding plants, in shrubs and on roadsides."

Over the next several weeks, Curran urges farmers, landscapers and others to keep an eye out for horseweed that isn't controlled by the standard application of herbicide.

"I think it's inevitable that it'll be here — it probably already is, and just hasn't been identified," Curran said. "This weed gets a foothold in no-till continuous soybean crops — where they grow soybeans in the same field for several years in a row. In Pennsylvania, that's not the norm. Most of the time, our more diverse crop rotations could keep this problem at bay."

"In places where it's a problem — such as Kentucky and Tennessee — they're rotating no-till cotton with no-till soybeans, so they're using the same herbicide

on different crops. The key to preventing these kinds of problems is to rotate crops and herbicide families, change modes of action by not using the same herbicide annually, and use non-chemical methods to manage weeds."

Curran said if you suspect a resistance problem, notify your county Penn State Cooperative Extension agent immediately so that he or she can confirm that a problem exists.

"Investigate the causes and factors," he said. "How big was it at application? What rate or applications were applied? Is there a spray pattern associated with the surviving plant? Are the plants displaying different levels of herbicide injury? Just because you didn't kill the weed doesn't mean it's resistant. In fact, frequently it's not."

Each horseweed plant produces hundreds of thousands of seeds that disperse on the wind

like dandelions. Swift action with alternative herbicides and other physical control methods can eliminate the plants, Curran said. Once they go to seed, it's too late.

"We're talking about horseweed today, but there are other weeds that can develop resistance," he said. "There have been some glyphosate performance problems with common lamb-quarters and other weeds on Maryland's Eastern Shore and in portions of the Midwest. There have been more resistance problems worldwide with the ALS-inhibitor family — a different family of herbicides — than with any other family, and we're just starting to see those problems in Pennsylvania the last two or three years. The bottom line is that overreliance on any pest management strategy will eventually produce problems and possibly failure. Herbicide or pest resistance is just one example that's close to home."

Ag Committee Hears Testimony On WTO Negotiations

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The House Committee on Agriculture conducted a hearing May 21 on the status of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations on agriculture, the wide range of positions taken by other countries in these negotiations, and efforts to reach a consensus on agriculture reform in the WTO.

Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick testified before the committee.

In his opening statement, Ag Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte said, "For American farmers and ranchers, trade is an es-

sential part of their livelihood. The WTO negotiations offer an opportunity for the United States to increase agricultural exports. It is essential that the voices of America's farmers and ranchers are heard in the WTO negotiations and that U.S. agriculture is a full partner in all negotiations."

In November 2001, the World Trade Organization Fourth Ministerial in Doha provided the timetable for worldwide trade negotiations on a variety of subjects, including agriculture. WTO agricultural negotiations began in 2000, in accord with the Uruguay Round Agreement, and then con-

tinued under the Doha Declaration.

"If the Doha Round is going to be successful, the European Union is going to have to reform its Common Agricultural Policy," said Ranking Member Charlie Stenholm.

"With regard to multilateral trade rules, Ambassador Zoellick has correctly pointed out that agriculture is 50 years behind the industrial sector, and I look forward to working with him and Chairman Goodlatte to reverse this situation."

The stated U.S. goal of these negotiations is to establish a market-oriented trading system that is fair, builds on strong rules with specific commitments on government support to agriculture, and for countries to reach agreement by January 1, 2005.

The U.S. first submitted its proposal for comprehensive long-term agricultural trade reform in June 2000. In June 2002 it announced specific levels of reduction in the areas of market access, export subsidies, and domestic support.

The U.S. proposal was

aimed at leveling the playing field through harmonization of tariffs and domestic support and elimination of export subsidies.

The March 31, 2003 deadline, expressed in the Doha Development Agenda, for adopting the reduction commitments passed without any agreement on proceeding with negotiations. However, it is anticipated that the WTO Fifth Ministerial, to take place in Mexico in September 2003, will help move the negotiating process forward.

Goodlatte and Stenholm expect to lead a delegation of ag committee members to the Ministerial meetings in Cancun.

Agricultural tariffs around the world average 62 percent while U.S. agricultural tariffs average 12 percent. The European Union (EU) is the largest user of trade distorting domestic support and is allowed to spend over \$60 billion per year while the U.S. is allowed \$19 billion. Additionally, the EU uses over 90 percent of the world's export subsidies.

The committee is also scheduled to conduct a June 18 hearing during to hear from several organizations representing farmers and ranchers across the U.S.

Free Nitrogen Soil Tests

CARLISLE (Cumberland Co.) — Do you know how much nitrogen is available in your cornfields? Do you know how much nitrogen fertilizer your cornfields need for maximum production? Most farmers will answer these questions with an educated guess, but why guess when crop yields can be affected.

The most accurate means available to answer these questions is soil sampling. A soil test taken in March will accurately estimate the amount of phosphorous (P) and potassium (K) levels in the soil. Unfortunately, this report does not give the concentration of nitrogen (N) as it does for P and K.

To determine the available N, a soil test should be taken as close to the time of crop uptake as possible. A soil sample taken from a cornfield when the corn is approximately 8-12 inches tall can help determine what the N levels are in the soil. Once the samples are taken, the results provide the farmer with a means of rapid soil nitrate analysis.

As a service to Cumberland County farmers, this test is offered free of charge. The staff will assist in sample collection and run the test. Results from the test will be available within one or two days of sampling.

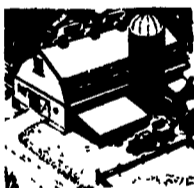
Those interested, can contact the agricultural staff at the Cumberland County Conservation District (717) 240-7812.

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