

Weather plays major role in rust's return

By DUANE DAILEY

WIDELY scattered infections of Asian soybean rust across the state late last growing season doesn't mean the disease will be back this year in time to cause crop damage.

University of Missouri plant pathologists say rust in soybeans, just like rust in wheat and corn, must return each year. The disease cannot overwinter here. Rust spores survive only on living plant tissue, not in soil or trash.

Key Points

- Asian soybean rust cannot overwinter here; it must return each year.
- Rust survival and dispersal highly depend on the weather.
- MU Extension scientist says double cropping could increase risk.

Infestations must be blown back into the state by southern winds during the growing season.

This winter's frigid Arctic blasts

pushing down to the Gulf of Mexico killed host plants in the South. A soybean rust Web site reports that kudzu, an alternate host, was frosted back except in protected spots along the Gulf Coast. That could reduce spore sources, delaying rust in the coming season.

Soybean rust survival and dispersal depend on the weather. Missouri pathologists learned a lot about weather influences on rust in their close encounter in 2007. Allen Wrather, Extension pathologist at the MU Delta Center, Portageville,

says rust prefers mild weather with cloud cover and frequent rainfall. High temperatures and sunshine destroy airborne spores.

Previously, Asian soybean rust infestations didn't reach Missouri until after harvest. Last year, tropical storms in Texas dispersed rust spores across the Soybean Belt, causing infestations. But again, it occurred late in the season after the crop was made in most places.

Prolonged torrential rains over Texas and Oklahoma finally crept into Missouri and Kansas. Storm remnants carried rust across Missouri and northward as far as Canada.

In Missouri, the 2007 infestations arrived after the crop had reached pod-fill, except for late-planted seed beans in the Bootheel. Some growers sprayed fields with fungicide. After four years, this was the first time Missouri bean fields were at risk of yield loss.

Double-crop risk

Wrather says renewed interest in soybeans following wheat may change the risk as commodity prices cause growers to consider more double cropping. Late beans may be at greater risk of infection, requiring spraying, if weather favorable to rust develops.

Scouting and early detection are key to preventing yield loss. U.S. producers can learn from Brazilians who were slow initially in responding to Asian soybean rust, which hit South America before being carried to the U.S. in a hurricane.

Quick response with spray rigs full of fungicide is needed once rust pustules are found on soybean leaves.

Editor's note: See related article, "Scouting system for finding rust in place for '08," on Page 16.

Wetlands program deadline Feb. 22

MISSOURI farmers and landowners interested in the Wetlands Reserve Program should apply by Feb. 22 to be eligible for the next round of funding, according to the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

WRP is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to restore, enhance and protect wetlands on their properties. NRCS provides technical and financial support to help landowners with their wetland restoration efforts.

By signing WRP easements, landowners receive cash payments in exchange for restoring or converting marginal agricultural land to shallow wetland areas. They also agree to maintain the areas protected by the easements.

WRP easement offers will represent the property's appraised value, the easement rate cap for that region or the landowner's offer — whichever is lowest.

Missouri NRCS has increased WRP easement rate caps and updated its ranking form. The ranking form and the rate cap map for Missouri's five WRP geographic regions are viewable at: www.mo.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp/wrp_eligibility.html.

To sign up for WRP or to get more information, contact the NRCS office serving your county. Look in the phone book under "U.S. Government, Department of Agriculture."



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