

Volunteer corn dragging yield down

AS volunteer corn continues to infest more soybean fields, farmers are finding that last season's corn could come back to haunt this year's bottom line.

"Corn is a weed when it's growing in a field of soybeans," notes Mike Owen, Extension weed specialist at Iowa State University.

When corn grows in the wrong situation, it can become a very competitive weed. Glyphosate-resistant volunteer corn in a field planted to a glyphosate-resistant bean variety is the wrong situation. The beans are forced to compete with volunteer corn for light and soil moisture.

"It may be difficult for you to consider the added cost that comes with controlling volunteer corn when you are already paying technology fees and for glyphosate itself," says Mike Moechnig, Extension weed specialist at South Dakota State University. "But applications of grass control herbicides can be profitable when they result in higher soybean yields."

Look beyond basic field appearances to determine whether to treat for volunteer corn. Also consider the money you stand to lose if you don't treat. In side-by-side comparisons, soybean crops fighting volunteer corn suffered a definite yield loss, even those with a low density of corn present. Results from an SDSU study suggest that only four corn plants per 100 feet of row could reduce soybean yield by 5%.

"It can be difficult to appreciate the yield loss that can be caused by volunteer corn because the density can appear very low and it can be hard to see the immediate effect on the soybeans," says Moechnig.

There are solutions — chemical and cultural — to help preserve glyphosate technology. The primary recommendation from industry and university researchers is to use a postemergence grass herbicide in conjunction with glyphosate to control volunteer corn. "The best bet is to include a grass herbicide in the postemergence program to take out volunteer corn," says Moechnig.

Some solutions

There are a lot of grass herbicide options for growers: Assure II, Fusilade, Fusion, Poast-Plus and a new entrant, Select Max Herbicide with Inside Technology.

Monsanto's Roundup Rewards program supports this practice by offering discounts per acre when farmers use Select Max — the only postemergence grass herbicide that qualifies for the program — in conjunction with Roundup herbicides.

An improved version of Select herbicide, Select Max was introduced to the

Key Points

- Consider treating to kill volunteer corn regardless of corn density.
- Apply a postemergence grass herbicide as early in the season as possible.
- Rootworm is another risk when volunteer corn is allowed to grow in bean fields.

market earlier in 2006 and has gained adoption among soybean farmers for

its quick and complete control of volunteer corn.

Speed of kill is a common desire when fighting volunteer corn. Jeff Schorg, owner of Schorg Ag Supply of Remsen in northwest Iowa sees volunteer corn in fields and his customers want fast, effective treatments. "Even with Select Max's lowest labeled rate, we get a quicker kill of volunteer corn," says Schorg. "Other grass herbicides seem to take longer, but Select Max works faster and the vol-

unteer corn is totally brown."

Researchers are encouraged that farmers seem to be meeting these challenges head on and adopting newer practices into their glyphosate systems. But some farmers may be tempted to use Liberty herbicide to control volunteer corn when LibertyLink soybeans are released. Liberty may not adequately control volunteer corn. You'll need to draw on past experience to prevent the problem from developing in your fields.



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He said it

"Diligence and speed of control will pay when you are fighting volunteer corn in soybean fields."

Jeff Schorg



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