

Must tackle volunteer corn

By TOM J. BECHMAN

BATTLES against volunteer corn in soybeans go way back.

Before post-grass products and Roundup Ready soybeans, some folks wicked it with Roundup. Others let it go and watched profits dwindle. Poast, Fusilade and the ensuing host of grass

Key points

- One volunteer corn plant per square meter of soybeans causes yield loss.
- Volunteer corn left alone could be a haven for promoting insect resistance.
- Scout early — choose effective grass herbicide and spray accordingly.

TOO MANY TO LEAVE:

Taking out these volunteer plants is worth the cost.

herbicides made control much easier.

Enter Roundup Ready corn and — guess what? Volunteer corn the next



year is also Roundup Ready. Suddenly it's either invest in a post-grass treatment or live with an ugly field.

Prevent yield loss

Bill Johnson, Purdue University weed-control specialist, says there are two reasons to take out Roundup Ready volunteer corn. And neither has anything to do with ugly corn.

"First, we're looking at yield loss" Johnson says. A Purdue University study in 2008 showed that the economic threshold for payback for spraying was less one to two volunteer plants per square meter of soybeans.

At around one volunteer corn plant per square meter, yield for soybeans was significantly lower by about 2 or more bushels per acre. At four plants per square meter, yield dropped from 54 to 36 bushels per acre.

"Most volunteer GMO corn carries *Bt* genes," Johnson says. "Work by Purdue entomologists indicates that the *Bt* toxin is present at lower doses.

"They're not sure what that might mean for insect populations that *Bt* corn controls. But they suspect that over time, it could contribute to faster onset of insect resistance.

"Volunteer corn tends to hide under the canopy early," he says. "We recommend scouting and spraying in a timely manner with a grass herbicide."



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