

# Check soybean seed treatments

By TOM J. BECHMAN

**D**ECIDING whether to apply phosphate and potash and how much nitrogen to apply got the big headlines this winter. But many conversations revolved around another hot topic: Where do seed-treated soybean insecticides fit?

Three experts supplied by the Indiana Certified Crop Advisors group expressed their thoughts on this issue. Here are their views.

First, Dan Ritter, Purdue University Extension ag educator in Newton County, notes that while most agronomists agree insecticide seed treatments control bean leaf beetles in late spring, the question is how often that insect poses a real threat.

"Early-planted soybeans are most susceptible to bean leaf beetle feeding in the seedling stage, especially if there are no other soybeans in the area at the time," Ritter says.

However, data from Ohio State University indicate early feeding seldom causes much leaf injury. Seed-treated insecticides won't limit populations of bean leaf beetle in the mid- to late summer. That's why Ohio State entomologists don't recommend seed-treated insecticides as a preventive measure, Ritter notes.

## Different strategy

Others take a slightly different view. Gene Flaningam, of Flaningam Ag Consulting LLC, Vincennes, Ind., suggests treating at least the first 25% of early-planted soybeans with a seed treatment. He calls it a "proactive" approach to management.

"Bean leaf beetle feeding can cause significant economic stress early in the growing season," Flaningam says. "There's really no way of knowing if you will have a problem before you plant."

As far as economic thresholds after the fact, Flaningam says that in the seedling stage, five or more beetles per foot of row, or one damaged plant per foot, should trigger treatment.

From the earliest vegetative state to blooming, this requires 10 or more beetles per foot of row, and more than 30% defoliation. From blooming through seed development, consider treatment if there are 10 or more bean leaf beetles per foot, with 20% defoliation. Or treat if there are at least 15 beetles and 10% pod damage.

## New treatments work

Steve Dlugosz, an agronomist with Harvest Land Co-op in east-central Indiana, says that the "new" insecticide seed treatments work well. Many, but not all, also contain fungicides. Know which active ingredients are included in a seed treatment, and why each ingredient is there. What insects and diseases are the manufacturer or seed company that treats the seed hoping to control?

"Past insect history would be your best guide to predict if this treatment will pay," Dlugosz says. Bean leaf beetle feeding is easy to spot early in the season, he says. Look for small holes

## Key Points

- There's no argument: New seed-treated insecticides control bean leaf beetle.
- The question is whether or not you'll see enough feeding to justify treatment.
- Early-season treatments won't protect against midseason bean leaf beetles.

**BIG BARK?** Bean leaf beetles feeding on cotyledons can look bad, and the insect can cause damage. It's usually relatively minor at this time in the season, however.

in lower leaves, or for tattered leaves down low on the plant.

If you want to establish a baseline on bean leaf beetle feeding, scout



this spring. Dlugosz suggests starting scouting when soybeans emerge, and continuing until a trifoliolate develops.

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## Illinois consultant sees favorable results with first-time Stratego use

John Heckert recommends Stratego to growers for future corn and soybean seasons

**A**s a consultant for an independent retailer, John Heckert, Franklin Grove, Ill., saw first-time results after a client tried Stratego® fungicide this past season.

And seeing was believing for Heckert.

The grower used Stratego partnered with Leverage® 2.7 insecticide on his soybeans, and the results spoke for themselves.

"The yield was the strongest selling point," Heckert said. "We didn't face any major weather or disease issues, and Stratego helped strong plants be stronger."

Like many Illinois consultants and growers, Heckert relied on the broad-spectrum control of

Stratego. With its unique plant surface retention and redistribution action, Stratego improves coverage, boosts the plant's natural defense system and provides better disease control.



**"With results like I witnessed, I'd encourage other growers to give Stratego a try with their beans."**

— John Heckert, Franklin Grove, Ill.

Specifically in soybeans, Stratego works best as a preventive application for control of Asian soybean rust, as well as other diseases such as Anthracnose, Alternaria leaf spot, frogeye leaf spot and brown spot.

The result Heckert observed in his client's soybeans: healthier, stronger plants leading to higher yield and profit potential. The yield of his client's Illinois soybeans treated with Stratego was 7 bu/A greater than those not treated.

These results are reflective of grower, consultant and university research that averaged a 3.8 bu/A yield increase vs. untreated soybeans across multiple field trials in 2008, and an average yield increase of 2.9 bu/A across more than 200 trials conducted from 2004 to 2008.

"With results like I witnessed, I'd encourage other growers to give Stratego a try with their beans," Heckert suggested. "My customer saw a difference, and we plan to see more of the same in the future. We will use it again."

For additional information on Stratego, growers can contact their local Bayer CropScience representative or visit [www.BayerCropScienceUS.com](http://www.BayerCropScienceUS.com).



A Brownsburg, Ind., 2008 side-by-side test plot with the untreated check on the left and Stratego and Leverage 2.7 treated soybeans on the right.

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