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To protect the usefulness and availability of these technologies for the future, growers must implement an Insect Resistance Management (IRM) program as specified in product use guides for the following traits available in Pioneer corn hybrids: Herculex® I, Herculex RW, Herculex XTRA and YieldGard® Corn Borer.

For detailed IRM requirements for hybrids with in-plant insect resistance, refer to the appropriate product use guide, available from your Pioneer sales professional or on the web at: www.pioneer.com/IRM.



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USE SPARINGLY: Experts do not condone insecticide applications without proper scouting.



Experts worry over insecticide use

By **JOSH FLINT**

SEVERAL years ago, farmers rarely applied fungicides. Today, the practice is fairly commonplace.

Quite often, farmers are tossing an insecticide in the tank with the fungicide because the insecticide is fairly inexpensive. This practice is making Kevin Steffey nervous.

"We hear people are doing it with zero knowledge of what insects are in the field," says Steffey, a University of Illinois entomologist. "Putting an insecticide on because it's cheap is not wise."

Steffey's heard reports of farmers adding insecticides for as little as \$5 per acre. Spraying unchecked acres causes several problems. First, it kills off natural predators, Steffey says. It also increases selection pressure, making a spray-resistant bug more likely.

Lastly, Steffey warns this practice could invite additional regulations to the farming industry. "If they don't control this, soon they'll have to convince people that they're using these products justifiably."

He says the main argument for tossing in the insecticide is: "There may not be one pest at an economic level, but when you put them all together, it makes sense to add the insecticide." In Steffey's opinion, this argument is weak and is not supported by any scientific data.

Kevin Black, Growmark's insect/plant disease technical manager, says his company has increasingly felt the

Key Points

- Applying insecticide because it's cheap may not be wise.
- Experts say to scout fields before applying an insecticide.
- Use multiple resources to help scout for pests.

pressure of pairing fungicides with insecticides without the proper scouting reports. Black says Growmark does not support this practice.

"We promote good agronomy practices and try to promote integrated pest management practices, as well," he explains. "The automatic use of any crop protection product without knowledge of a targeted situation or pest does not fit those practices."

Black reasons that many growers have discovered fungicide/insecticide combinations have a relatively consistent payback. Therefore, many of them have stopped questioning that payback. Plus, many growers don't have the time to scout each field properly, he adds.

"Factor in the strong grain markets we have recently enjoyed, and it's easy to understand why prophylactic use of fungicides and insecticides has gained such popularity," Black concludes.

Scouting report

As Black mentions, most farmers realize the importance of crop scouting, but few find the time to get it all done. Steffey says it's a crucial part of an integrated

pest management program.

Steffey recommends scouting each field at least once a week, especially when crops are still developing. If reports indicate soybean aphids may be lurking, he says to scout every three days. "Soybean aphids can double in population every three to four days," he adds.

John Reifsteck likes to know what he's looking for before he gets into the field. He uses U of I's "The Bulletin" (www.ipm.uiuc.edu/bulletin) to check insect reports. During the growing season, it comes out at least once a week.

"The Bulletin' helps me know specifically what insects to be on the lookout for," Reifsteck adds.

He checks each field at least once a week. In addition to his scouting, he also relies on a technical sales associate's help. While Reifsteck knows what his fields are doing, a sales associate generally knows what's going on in the area.

"If I've no-tilled a field and someone else is having a problem with insects in a no-till field, then that salesperson will know what to look for," he explains.

In this situation, he says trust plays a big part. "I would never deal with any salesperson who I thought was just out to sell me something."

Nominations due for 2009 Masters

IN November, a focus group of Master Farmers told *Prairie Farmer* they'd like to see the awards banquet moved back to March. The staff listened. However, to make preparations for a March banquet, Master Farmer nominations are needed by Jan. 5.

Now that the combine is parked, take some time to point out the best farmers Illinois has to offer. After all, few things mean more than being nominated for "Illinois' Farming Hall of Fame," as one past winner put it.

Nomination forms are available online at www.PrairieFarmer.com. Select "More Prairie Farmer," then click "Master Farmer." The form is available in two formats: Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat Reader. Or call 217-877-9070 to request a nomination form by mail.

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