

Crop Production

At right time, fungicide pays off

By ANN TONER

MANY areas of wheat country were blessed with rain this year, and wheat prices were good. The combination meant many producers were money ahead to spray a fungicide on their wheat crop, says Curt Thompson, Kansas State University Extension crops and soils specialist for southwest Kansas.

Preliminary yield results coming from K-State plots, where conditions were conducive to fungus attacks, indicate plots sprayed with fungicide have a 1- to 4-pound increase in test weight and a 10- to 15-bushel yield advantage over identical unsprayed plots. The spray advantage is greatest where susceptible varieties, including the popular Jagger and Jagalene, were grown. Details of the studies will be available at winter wheat meetings.

Think before you spray

Farmers facing a fungus threat could spend \$20 an acre to spray and still make money if they have a good stand.

However, Thompson doesn't believe that annual routine spraying pays off in the absence of a fungal threat, except maybe for wheat seed fields, where producing clean, heavy kernels is essential to next year's crop.

Rather, Thompson recommends farmers decide the merits of spraying based on their specific conditions. It begins with awareness.

Farmers must know whether the varieties they've planted are particularly susceptible to rust and other funguses. Also, keep in mind field conditions and yield potential of the crop and whether that is enough to justify spray costs.

Since rust spores blow in, wheat growers should be aware of rust problems in Oklahoma and Texas, and scout their own fields for early signs of rust.

Wheat fields need to be sprayed before or at flowering.

When fungicide pays

Jim Shroyer, K-State Extension agronomist, cites some examples of when spraying did pay off. He says in 2004, researchers had about a 10-bushel yield advantage using the 14-ounce rate of Syngenta's Quilt fungicide over the same varieties unsprayed. The more susceptible the variety was to rust, the bigger the yield gain.

The results were as follows: Overlay,



Key Points

- It pays to use a fungicide when your wheat fields are threatened.
- Spraying can save test weight and 10 to 15 bushels per acre in yield.
- Crop specialist says spraying when it isn't needed may be money wasted.

72.9 bushels with spray vs. 63.3 bushels unsprayed; 2145, 71.1 bushels with spray vs. 62.2 bushels unsprayed; Jager,

72.1 bushels with spray vs. 57.1 bushels unsprayed; Jagaline, 84.6 bushels with spray vs. 74.1 bushels unsprayed.

Thompson says in 2005, southwest Kansas saw a 10- to 15-bushel yield response to spraying, but 2006 saw no response to the practice. But he believes the 2007 results still being tabulated will also show a large yield response.

New products for wheat

Plant pathologist Erick DeWolf says a new fungicide is available for use with

the 2007-08 wheat crop. Proline, from Bayer Crop Protection, is reputed to be effective on head scab (*Fusarium head blight*) and can also be used on foliar leaf diseases. The active ingredient is prothioconazole.

Two additional Bayer products could be approved for use on wheat by spring: Prosaro (tebuconazole plus prothioconazole) is said to work on head scab and leaf disease suppression; Absolute (trifloxystrobin plus tebuconazole) is a strong leaf-rust control agent.

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