

Kansas farmers encouraged to be proactive in wheat disease control

For an audio file, visit www.kansaswheat.org.

Wheat planting season is here, and producers are making decisions that can affect next year's crop, for both themselves and their neighbors. Farmers should select wheat varieties with high resistance to fungal diseases as well as to apply fungicides to seed before drilling wheat this season. A number of wheat diseases were seen throughout the state prior to and during wheat harvest this summer.

Wheat farmers should also control their volunteer wheat in order to prevent severe problems that could cost both them, and their neighbors, a pretty penny.

Volunteer wheat carries several risks, such as wheat streak mosaic virus, Russian wheat aphids, barley yellow dwarf virus and many more. Keep in mind that it is critical that all volunteer wheat within a 1/2 mile be completely dead for at least two weeks prior to planting in the fall.

Wheat streak mosaic virus is the most important risk of volunteer wheat, and it has the largest impact.

Barley yellow dwarf can also be prevented by controlling volunteer wheat. While volunteer wheat isn't the root cause of these issues, it is the first line of defense against them. Destroying the "green bridge," the grasses that harbor disease-ridden insects, and waiting for two weeks ensures that the insects and the diseases they carry, both onto your fields and your neighbors', are no longer threats to your crops.

In addition to stripe rust, head scab and wheat streak mosaic virus, wheat flag smut was found in the state this spring for the first time in decades.

According to Jeff Vogel, the Kansas Department of Agriculture's Plant Protection and Weed Control program manager, "Research has shown that the use of certified seed combined with fungicide seed treatments, is highly effective in preventing the spread of disease." He noted that producers and seedsmen should follow proper protocols to ensure that a thorough and even application of fungicide is made to the seed to ensure a high level of product effectiveness.

Wheat flag smut can lie dormant in the soil for as many as four or five years, so fungicide treatment is necessary to mitigate the disease.

K-State Research and Extension's [Seed Treatment Fungicides for Wheat Disease Management](#) publication is an excellent source for wheat seed treatments frequently used.

It states, "Fungicide seed treatments are an important part of wheat production in Kansas. Seed treatments can effectively manage seed-borne disease, such as common bunt, flag smut, and loose smut; generally improve stand establishment; suppress the development of root rot diseases; and inhibit the development of foliar diseases in the fall. Products containing insecticides also can reduce fall aphid populations and lower the risk of severe barley yellow dwarf.

A wheat industry working group was assembled this summer to determine best voluntary management practices and mitigation strategies to help ensure that the presence of disease does not spread or increase in 2016.

Kansas Wheat encourages producers to reach out to K-State Research and Extension expertise for best management practices.

For additional information on wheat diseases in Kansas, visit www.kansaswheat.org.