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Corn Disease Pressure Increases

The confirmation of Southern Rust this past week in counties just southwest of the Meadowlark Extension District is a good reminder that we're not out of the woods yet when it comes to disease pressures affecting this corn crop. Even as Tar Spot pressure remains (mostly) low, isolated reports of increasing pressure from that disease have been noted as well.

Some fields have already seen a fungicide application. In those fields, scouting should restart 14-21 days post application as fungicide efficacy starts to wane. With any luck, protection will last until disease pressure will no longer affect yield, but scouting will be necessary to confirm as such. What's that stage? The R5 (dent) growth stage typically signals the end of any potential benefits of a fungicide application, but realistically, it's difficult to get much return on investment from applications even at the R4 (dough) stage (approximately 30 days post silking).

If you haven't applied a fungicide, scout frequently. Recent moisture events could have increased Tar Spot pressure, and the confirmation of Southern Rust in NEK means it could be in area fields as well. Disease development can occur quickly, so while a fungicide application isn't recommended in the absence of disease, it's good to at least have an idea of what you might use should the need arise. Fungicide efficacy ratings for both diseases can be found in a reference from the National Corn Disease Working Group found at the Crop Protection Network website at <https://cropprotectionnetwork.org/publications/fungicide-efficacy-for-control-of-corn-diseases>. Hard copies are available from our offices upon request.

Not sure if you have Tar Spot or Southern Rust? Tar Spot develops as small, black, raised spots (circular or oval) on infected plants, and may appear on one or both sides of leaves, leaf sheaths, and husks. It will not rub off. Southern rust produces orange pustules, primarily on the upper leaf surface. To help with diagnosis, physical plants or digital images can be submitted through any District Office. The Kansas State Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab is also offering free testing for both Southern Rust and Tar Spot. If you would like to submit samples, contact any District Office for shipping details. Even if you know what you have, disease confirmation reports are helpful as we continue to track these diseases.