



New Pests Keep Coming

I had a relative ask me recently why I needed to go to continuing education seminars because he had assumed things rarely changed in crop production. Two pests recently confirmed west of the Missouri-Mississippi divide reaffirm why it's important to stay current in your crop production knowledge.

The first pest I'd like to discuss is the grape colaspis. The grape colaspis is a small white grub that has been causing problems in states to the east of us for up to 8 years in corn and soybean. The larval stage of the insect does its damage by chewing off the fine roots hairs in corn and soybean that are used for nutrient uptake; predominantly phosphorus. It's no surprise that the symptoms resemble phosphorus deficiency in young plants. Fields that are planted early in undisturbed no-till fields with weeds are at the highest risk. The mild winters that we have been experiencing haven't helped either. The adult stage also defoliates the leaves of corn and soybean, but is not as much of a concern as the roots feeding larvae.

The second pest is another insect called the soybean aphid. It was first reported in America a little more than two years ago and has become a serious problem in states to the northeast of us. The insect feeds pretty much all season as long as there is green tissue. The can be found on the underside leaves sucking the sap out of them. To make matters worse, they are also known to transmit Soybean Mosaic Virus. If there numbers are heavy enough the leaves can become distorted by puckering and are often yellow. The one good item I have heard on this pest is that resistant varieties are being developed, though it will be a while before they are brought to the seed bean market.

I think it's safe to say the new pests will always come along and the important thing to keep in mind is that crop production is a dynamic system that will continue to demand refinement with each new challenge.