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WIREWORM ALERT!

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It appears that wireworms will again be a problem this year. We have already had reports of stand establishment problems due to wireworms in peanuts and in cotton. As you must certainly remember, wireworms were a concern for many growers and consultants in 2003.



Wireworms are the larval stage of a beetle in the family, Elateridae or click beetles. While the adults are a curiosity, it is only the larval stage that concerns us here. Problems with wireworms appear to be greatest in fields following grain crops, more so sorghum than corn or wheat. Conditions that adversely affect wireworms are cold winters, irrigations or rainfall during the winter or early spring that flood fields. Planting shallow and under warm conditions often will allow seeds to germinate rapidly and for plants to outgrow wireworms. In the old days, the organochlorine insecticides: chlordane, dieldrin, lindane, heptachlor and aldrin were used for control. These products are no longer registered or legal to use.

We currently have no insecticide labeled as a preventative or curative treatments for wireworms in cotton or peanuts. Thimet is labeled for wireworm control in field corn at the rate of 3.67 – 4.9 lbs/A., there is no data for cotton. Temik is not labeled on any crop for wireworm control. We do not have any data thus far to indicate that it would be effective. Likewise, the Orthene or Gaucho seed treatments are not labeled for wireworm control. Producers should not expect control. Syngenta's Cruiser seed treatment is labeled for field corn, seed corn, sweet corn, sorghum and beans for wireworm control. While Cruiser is labeled for use in cotton, it is not labeled for wireworm control. The company does not have any efficacy data at this time. It would be difficult to put out a definitive test against wireworms considering they are an occasional pest and difficult to predict, and infestations can be spotty across infested fields. This said, Cruiser treated seed may be the best option to at least try in a replant situation.



Once a stand problem is discovered and the cause has been identified as wireworms, there is little a producer can do to control the infestation. I am not aware of any data that would indicate that any of the insecticides applied and watered in would control wireworms in an existing plant stand. Replanting following excessive stand loss is usually indicated and often succeeds in cotton where moisture allows for shallow planting and hot weather accelerates emergence.

I do have a request of everyone. Please document all fields that have stand loss problems attributed to wireworm feeding damage. I would like to know when it was planted, what the previous crop was, what insecticide if any was on the seed or applied to the soil and at what rate, and the date you made the wireworm damage assessment. This information may provide some indication of what is not working.

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