

Kentucky Specialist Gives Update On Southern Corn Rust And Other Diseases

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Southern corn rust has become more of a concern for corn production in the US in the last few years. The cultivation of corn over vastly greater acreage in both Mexico and the lower Mississippi Valley has increased this potential threat in Kentucky.

This is because the southern corn rust fungus overwinters in corn fields in Mexico and southern Florida. The increased acreage of corn in the lower Mississippi Valley increases the risk to Kentucky by creating a more effective pathway for the fungus as it spreads northward during the growing season.

The extended rains this spring delayed planting extensively throughout Kentucky corn production areas. Delayed planting increases the risk of damage from southern corn rust. Late-planted fields are at greater risk because, should the fungus be blown into the field, late planted fields are at a comparatively earlier stage of crop development. Younger crops therefore have more developmental time to be damaged than early planted crops.

While the late planting creates a greater risk of southern corn rust this year, this disease is progressing very slowly in the South (Figure 1). Very dry weather has helped to slow down the spread of southern rust substantially. At this

time, for the Continental US, southern corn rust is only reported in one county in the Florida Panhandle. This is such a limited distribution that I wonder whether we'll see any significant pressure from southern rust in Kentucky this year.

So what this means is that growers should monitor the progress of southern rust this year. There is a very real possibility that we won't see any significant threat in Kentucky. You can monitor the progress of southern rust at the fol-

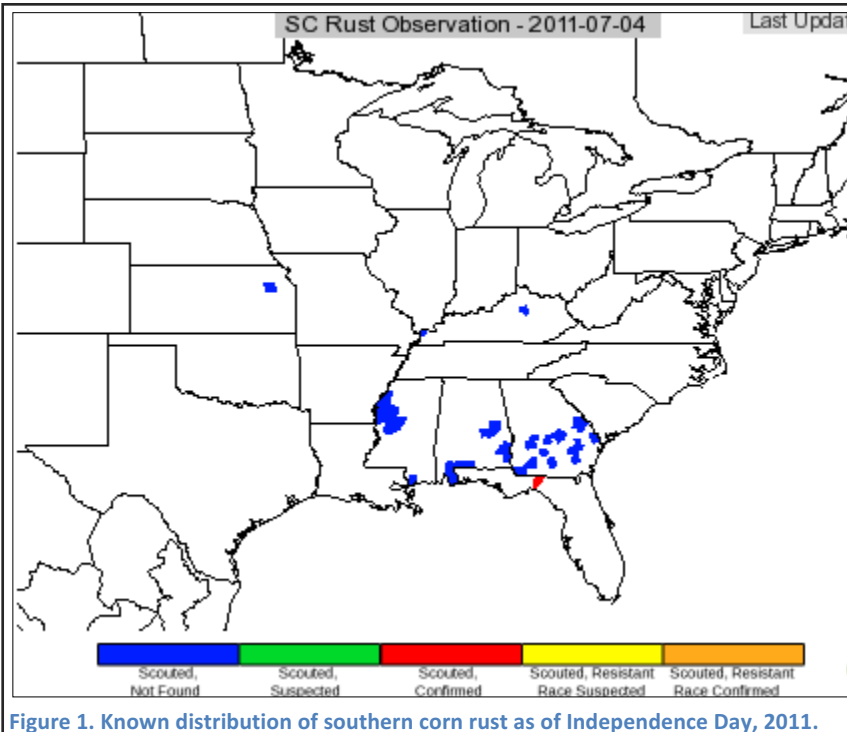


Figure 1. Known distribution of southern corn rust as of Independence Day, 2011.

lowing website: http://sba.ipmPIPE.org/cgi-bin/sbr/public.cgi?host=Corn&pest=southern_corn_rust.

Reports and field inspections thus far indicate minimal levels of gray leaf spot and northern leaf blight. Δ

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