

Know Your Seed Treatments

Entomologist: Buy Treatments You Need, But Save Money; Don't Buy Treatments You Don't Need

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The diversity of seed treatments was explained recently by University of Tennessee entomologist Dr. Scott Stewart who is stationed in west Tennessee at Jackson.

He and some of his colleagues proceeded to educate farmers on the differences in seed treatments and their value in eliminating pests.

"When my career started about 1995 we didn't use insecticide seed treatments and now it's 2012 and almost every acre of cotton and corn has insecticide seed treatment and many acres of soybeans have an insecticide seed treatment. So things have really changed," he said.

There really are only a few active ingredients being used. They have similar activity and similar uses, but there's some little differences. They are not exactly alike and they're not perfect. So he discussed some of the strengths and weaknesses of seed treatments and tried to eliminate some of the confusion.

"A lot of the confusion just stems from nomenclatures as we call it," Stewart explained. "Things are called different names by different companies; for example, we use Poncho in corn, that's clothianidin, we use clothianidin in soybean and it's called NipsIt or Gaucho, so you really do have to read the active ingredients to know what you're getting. Very often these things are packaged with fungicides and they're packaged with nematocides in which case they change the name and it may not say anything like Poncho or NipsIt or Gaucho on it, so you really do have to read the active ingredients to know what you're getting."

The rates for the different chemicals change too. However, overall, the insecticide seed treatments are a real win, win.

"In many cases I think they provide value to the producers and value to the companies, and if they didn't provide value to the companies we wouldn't get the opportunity to use them. It's good to have a win, win situation. It helps us in the long run."

Insecticide seed treatments are vitally important in cotton, and there really aren't many alternatives. Foliar approaches have been tried, but insecticide seed treatments are consistently increasing yields by 100 pounds of lint or more.

"You can't even buy corn without an insecticide seed treatment, and that, in itself, is an indication of its value," Stewart added. "Our

testing shows the treatment consistently increases yield by four or five bushels, but sometimes it can save you from complete devastation.

"Soybean is probably the least responsive crop



University of Tennessee entomologist Dr. Scott Stewart, explained how he and some of his colleagues proceed to educate farmers on the differences in seed treatments and their value in eliminating pests.

I work with in regards to insecticide seed treatments but there is value there if they're used in the right situations. In west Tennessee, insecticide seed treatment are recommended in soybeans that are early planted and no-tilled which applies to many fields.

"The real take home message is, it's confusing, but if you get out there and you really dig through the company literature, you look at the university resources out there, I think you can find what treatments are available. Once you understand the options, you realize they're pretty similar," he said. "There's a lot of redundancy in the chemicals used, and you become pretty familiar with them. It's really important for growers to understand what they are paying for, because our theme is seed and seed treatment costs.

"A bag of cotton seed is \$400 or \$500 per acre. Accidentally adding \$15 dollars an acre because you didn't understand that you had a nematocide seed treatment on that seed when you didn't need it is an unnecessary expense," he summed up.

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