

# Pioneer Talks Crops



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**C**orn harvest in the upper mid-South is now in full swing, and so far yields are above average to very good. There were some dry pockets this year, but overall the corn crop appears to be in good shape. This region typically receives some calls every year about certain issues, and this year is no exception.

Many growers have noticed at least two different patterns in this year's corn crop. First, the earliest planted corn in the upper mid-South seems to have been more susceptible to the weather extremes we experienced this year. These early planted fields had longer durations of cool, wet weather than fields planted in later April. This wet weather led to reduced stands due to seedling blight, reduced early root development and also more nitrogen loss due to leaching. Then the crop in this area experienced higher-than-normal temperatures with little to no rainfall during the later part of June. The earliest planted cornfields were closer to tassel. Thus, the corn crop was more susceptible to the hot, dry weather during that time. Some dryland fields, and even some irrigated fields with sandy soil types, suffered the most. It was very important to irrigate early and often during that time to reduce stress, especially on the lighter soil types.

Secondly, disease pressure is higher this year and is having an impact on yield. The region experienced a tough June, but since then the weather has been very nice. There was a very cool grain-filling period for most of the crop

with adequate rainfall as well. This environment set up a greater potential for disease development especially for southern rust, gray leaf spot and northern corn leaf blight. Several systems blew in from the South this year depositing heavy spore loads of southern rust in several fields. Most of the crop that was planted prior to the later part of April was far enough along to endure the rust with little yield loss. However, there may be some fields that were planted later or that received higher infestation levels that were not as fortunate. Also, the cool, wet weather during grain fill set up a good environment for northern corn leaf blight and gray leaf spot. There were higher infestation levels in some fields than experienced in 2004. Most leaf blight set in late enough to cause little yield loss, but in some hybrids that are more susceptible yield losses could be higher. This is even occurring in some fields that were treated with fungicides at 50 percent tassel due to the severity of the late infestation. It is important to keep these things in mind when recording 2009 yields.

Soybeans look really good in late September, but just like the corn there seems to be higher levels of disease pressure. Sudden death syndrome, bacterial blight and Cercospora leaf blight are common diseases in soybeans right now. However, the big story may be the higher levels of insect infestations that are being seen in late-planted soybeans such as soybean podworms and even soybean aphids. Soybean aphids have arrived in the upper mid-South in a big way. Rarely have they been seen them as far south as this year. There are even economic thresholds reported for this pest. The University of Missouri recommends treatment at 250 aphids per plant from R1 to R5. It is not recommended to treat once R6 has been reached unless the crop is stressed.  $\Delta$

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