Specialist Offers Tips To Recognize Diplodia

URBANA, ILL.

Diplodia stalk and ear rot made a "harvest-time" appearance in 2006, showed up again in 2007, and did not fail to make its presence known in 2008. It will thus likely appear in 2009 and that means that it's time for a little Diplodia review.

Diplodia overwinters as spores or pycnidia (black spots found just beneath the stalk surface that are actually fruiting bodies). These spores (those that overwinter or those born of pycnidia) are then splashed by rain, blown by wind, or transported by insects to the plant. Diplodia often appears on the corn plant late season with symptoms usually developing several weeks after silking.

Lower nodes become brown or straw colored and very soft with pith that has disintegrated, giving the interior stalk a "shredded" appearance. The pith has absolutely no pink discoloration. Just beneath the surface of the infected region, one can find small, black spots.

Symptoms may progress to the point that the entire plant dies or ear infection occurs. Ear rot tends to occur within a couple weeks of silking. White, bleached out regions appear on the ear husk and are eventually followed by a white mold that appears between the kernels.

Resistance (the selection of Giberella resistance specifically), balanced fertility, lower plant populations, and timing harvest to remove the crop a little earlier all play a roll in reducing problems with Diplodia stalk rot and Diplodia ear rot. Δ