

U Of I Researchers To Discuss Latest Crop Science Development At Agronomy Day

URBANA, ILL.

Researchers at the University of Illinois are measuring the behavior of western corn rootworms in different configurations of insect-resistant transgenic corn plots and adjacent non-transgenic refuges.

Joseph Spencer, insect behaviorist in the Illinois Natural History Survey, said data on the details of rootworm behavior are currently not available for rootworms in transgenic corn.

"Most of the research that we base our decisions on regarding rootworm management was conducted before we began planting transgenic corn," Spencer said. "We hope to learn some new things about how these insects behave because nobody has looked at them in this setting."

Since mid-June, Spencer, entomology graduate student Sarah Hughson, and 11 interns and student workers have been collecting rootworm beetles to map their movement and mating in research plots. Tests that identify the distinctive Bt proteins present in different transgenic corn varieties can be used to identify the original location of the insects.

"We can use the presence of tissue from plants that the beetles have been eating as a tool to tell where they came from—ei-

ther transgenic or refuge plants," Spencer said.

After field work concludes in August, these data will be used to determine whether a particular refuge configuration will ensure that susceptible beetles thoroughly penetrate the field and spread their genes.

Spencer and Hughson are just two of many researchers discussing the latest developments in crop science at the 2010 U of I Agronomy Day. The 54th annual event will be held on August 19 from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the U of I South Farms in Champaign.

Researchers will discuss some of the most pressing issues in Illinois agriculture. Topics will include herbicide-resistant waterhemp, global climate change and implications on future plant diseases, new soybean viruses, and more.

Farmers, industry representatives, media and anyone interested in agriculture are invited to attend this informational event. Tours will depart every half hour from 7 a.m. to noon at the Crop Science Research and Education Center on St. Mary's Road and Wright Street in Champaign.

For more information about Agronomy Day, visit agronomyday.cropsci.illinois.edu/. Δ