

Use Insecticides Wisely

Treat Fields Only When There's Threat Of Economic Damage

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Soybean aphids is a topic of concern for Dr. Kevin Steffey, extension specialist and Professor of Entomology in the University of Illinois Department of Crop Sciences.

In a recent presentation, he covered all of the field research underway on soybean insects over this past year 2007, including some references to the previous years.

"The research is focused on soybean aphids with a little bit of effort toward defoliators in soybeans, like Japanese beetle, bean leaf beetle, grasshoppers, anything that chews up leaf material," he said.

He provided an overview of that research effort and the preliminary results from the research.

"Right now, because of the high price of soybeans, the focus is on inputs, spraying spring insecticides, fungicides, sometimes in combination, sometimes separately and using seed applied insecticides," he said. "The question is, are these really needed both from an economic and ecological standpoint? I have some data

from research we conducted in 2007 indicating that some of those expenditures may not have been necessary, so ultimately the message to growers is to consider what you really want and make sure that you use insecticides only when they are warranted. From my perspective as an entomologist, when they are needed we certainly recommended insecticides in response to an insect problem that might cause economic yield loss. But if the insects are not present or if there is no assurance that they are at high enough levels to cause economic yield loss, don't spend the money unnecessarily on insecticides because the unintended consequences may not be something that we want to deal with in the future.

"Use insecticides only when needed," he said. There are a lot of marketing efforts out there right now suggesting that if you apply an insecticide and/or a fungicide you will get a yield benefit. Well maybe, maybe not. As I indicated, if the insects are at economic levels, certainly a benefit in yield is expected. If the insects aren't at economic levels, the benefit to yield shouldn't be anticipated and the insecticide should not be used." △



Dr. Kevin Steffey, UI Extension Specialist and Professor of Entomology discussing all of the field research underway focusing on soybean aphids.

Photo by John LaRose, Jr.