

Winter Wheat Planting Underway In Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

Fall may be harvest time for corn, cotton rice, sorghum and soybeans, but it's planting time for winter wheat in Arkansas.

Arkansas farmers had 4 percent of the crop planted according to this week's report from the National Agricultural Statistics Service. That's on par with last year and just above the 3 percent five-year average.

In a season where the unseasonably warm weather allowed most of Arkansas' spring planted crops to go into the ground early, Jason Kelley, extension wheat and feed grains agronomist for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, said he recommends against planting too early.

"This year, fall armyworm numbers are extremely high across much of Arkansas," he said on Friday. "I've gotten several calls about wheat in pastures and wildlife food plots that came up to good stands and then suddenly disappeared."

Another winter wheat enemy is the Hessian fly, with the Latin name of *Mayetiola destructor*. The fly's maggots feed on young wheat plants and can cause tiller death. The maggots can kill the whole plant if the infestation is severe enough.

"We have not seen large numbers of Hessian fly the last few years, but when we do, it can be devastating," Kelley said. "And the worst damage always seems to be in fields planted earlier than recommended."

Early planted fields are also more prone to Barley Yellow Dwarf Virus, which is transmitted by aphids in the fall.

For south Arkansas, recommended planting dates are Oct. 15-Nov. 15. For central Arkansas, Oct. 10-Nov. 10 and the earliest planting is in north Arkansas, Oct. 1-Nov. 1. Unlike spring crops, that plant south to north as the weather warms, winter wheat requires cooler temperatures. △



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