

Opinion

Drought Changing Farmer Behavior

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

Everyone wants to be the best at something. Competitive-ness is human nature.
“I run 50 head of cows.”
“Yeah, well, I have 55 head.”
“I raise 200 acres of corn and 150 acres of beans.”



Rita
BRHEL

“Hmm, I do 400 acres of corn and 300 acres of beans.”

We try to fight this by feigning a need for privacy. We don’t openly tell others how many acres we have, or exactly what we yielded - at least not until someone else tells us, and the numbers happen to be less impressive than ours.

That’s just the way farmers are. Sure, there are some that are more open to talking about farming practices, bantering back-and-forth which is the best way to grow barley or if the advice from the county agent panned out, maybe even sharing some tidbits with a beginning farmer. But for most of us, our experience was hard-won through our own trial-and-error, and we don’t want to give away our trade secrets for free, to just anybody.

I understand.
So, we talk farming with our neighbors, only divulging what we perceive as the most impressive numbers from our operation. Acres, yields, price received at the elevator or sale barn.

This is how one-upping goes in farming. Usually, Although it’s now starting to take on a different look.

Farmers in my community, like your community, gather at the local café or gas station and talk shop. And, slightly disturbingly, here is what I’m hearing more of:

“We’re in a worse drought than you. All the CRP acres have been cut for hay, and so-and-so down the road cut all his corn already for silage, and he swore he’d never do that.”

“Yeah, well, I cut my corn last week.”

“Last I heard, our drought rating was more severe than yours. We’ll be in an exceptional drought before you know it.”

And on the local television news, the big excitement every Wednesday is that the U.S. Drought Monitor updates weekly on Thursdays.

It’s a contest to see, instead of how good we got it, how bad can we get.

Equally exciting is when the weather forecast calls for a slight chance of rain. Ten, 20 percent? In normal years, we wouldn’t bat our eye at that number. It’d be as close to zero as saying so, because that means there’s a bigger chance that nothing will happen. The meteorologist is just covering for himself in case rain should come and ruin someone’s outdoor birthday party at the park. Nowadays, farmers watch the skies all day, willing every wispy cloud to grow big enough to produce a shower.

The weather person has to disclaim on every radar image that most of that stuff being shown isn’t reaching the ground. And it isn’t. The other night, a storm rolled through with enough punch to down a dead tree on our electric fence, and we didn’t even clear a 10th of an inch of rain in the gauge.

Who knows if this is part of global warming and climate change, a new Dust Bowl, or just a weird weather phenomenon that distinguishes the summer of 2012 from any other year? But, one thing is for sure, this drought is changing farmer behavior, and not necessarily for the better.

This Mite Be A Problem



PHOTO: RITA BRHEL

Spider Mites Love Droughty Crops – And That’s Trouble

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

As if lower yields from drought conditions aren’t bad enough, many producers this summer are contending with spider mites on their corn and soybeans — and the very hard decision of whether it is worth the money to spray these pesky arachnids. The drier and hotter the summer became, the more spider mites moved in.

“Continued hot, dry weather will only encourage further development of spider mite populations, as they move out of dried-up grassy areas into field crops,” said Neil Schumacher, regional agronomist for Central Valley Ag in Oakland, Neb.

Half the size of the smallest aphid nymph, these bugs suck plant juices out of the leaves. Already stressed by the weather, a large infestation will literally dry up the plant. The leaves yellow, turn brown, and fall off, eventually killing the plant. Most commonly, the entire crop won’t die but yield will be reduced by up to 60 percent.

“Mites suck leaf tissue fluid from the leaves, slowing photosynthesis and defoliation of the plant, resulting in smaller kernels, reduced test weights, smaller soybeans, reduced pods, and can affect late-season plant integrity,” Schumacher said.

Early signs of damage are leaf discoloration, but to distinguish spider mite damage from another cause of injury, such as diseases or simply drought stress, producers need to examine the underside of the leaf for the mites or other signs of their presence, such as eggs and webbing. Because spider mites are barely seen with the naked eye, it’s helpful to use a hand lens for examining leaves or, better yet, tapping the leaf above a page of paper or into a container and later looking at the leaf grit under a microscope. Spider mite damage is usually heaviest at the field border, as well as downwind of the original infestation.

There are two species of spider mites in the Midwest: twospotted spider mites attack soybeans, and the Banks grass mite prefers corn. Northeast Nebraska is seeing more mites on both corn and soybeans than South Dakota, while the South Dakota infestation is so far limited to only a few northern counties, said Mike Catangui, Extension entomologist with South Dakota State University in Brookings.

Widespread outbreaks occurred in 2006 and 2007, and this year’s infestations have not equaled that.

During a typical growing season, spider mites only pose an occasional threat to crops, said Tom Hunt, Extension entomologist from the University of Nebraska Haskell Ag Lab near Concord, Neb. Because they

prefer hot, dry weather, moderate temperatures and regular rains keep spider mites at bay. They overwinter in field borders and outside of the field, and are carried by the wind into the fields, and don’t usually become a problem until mid-summer when the temperatures rise and rains spread out.

“Spider mite thresholds are a little hard to put a firm number on, but if they are in multiple areas of the field and are moving up on the ear leaf or higher, treatment is warranted,” Schumacher said. Hunt said that control is most helpful once the plant has substantial leaf spotting or yellowing, but before there is browning and leaf drop. In South Dakota, Catangui recommends that producers spray when 10 percent, or one out of 10 leaves, has a heavy infestation of the spider mites and is starting to turn brown. This is figuring that a 10-percent defoliation will cause a 2.5-percent drop in yield, on \$9-per-bushel beans with a \$10-per-acre treatment plan.

“Treatments can be warranted until corn grain dent or soybean pod fill,” Schumacher added. But, Hunt said, care should be taken with late-season infestations as some miticides have up to a 45-day pre-harvest interval.

Treatment is spraying chemical, but it should be noted that all spraying has a detrimental effect on the many beneficial insects

that naturally control spider mites. During a typical year, these insects such as the mite destroyer beetle, six-spotted thrip, and the minute pirate bug are able to keep mite numbers below damaging levels in most fields. But during the mite’s ideal weather — drought — the populations increase too quickly for the predator bugs to keep up and spraying may be the only option.

Chemical control must come in contact with the mites, which can be difficult to do easily or effectively since they live on the underside of the leaves. Hunt recommends using three or more gallons of water per acre as a carrier, applied aerially in the very early morning or late evening. Because eggs are generally resistant, reinfestation is likely to occur in seven to 10 days after treatment because of the subsequent egg hatching, plus the reinfestation is often heavy because the spray killed the mites’ natural enemies. Plus, those insecticides labeled for “suppression only” have actually been found to stimulate spider mite activity.

In many cases, Hunt said, slowing the rate of population increase is all that can be accomplished with chemical control. Still, Catangui said, SDSU data shows that soybean growers who treated for spider mites in past years increased their yields by up to eight bushels per acre.

Pre-Order 2013 IRM Red Book From SDSU By Aug. 29

BROOKINGS — Record keeping has been identified as a roadblock in the path to profitable cattle operations. IRM Redbooks have proven themselves as a great tool in helping cattlemen around that roadblock,” says Julie Walker, SDSU Extension beef specialist.

“Producers can’t manage what they don’t measure” Walker said. “The IRM red book allows producers to keep numerous records in one location.

By keeping these records producers have their specific information to make good management decisions.”

The IRM Red book has been updated and includes:

- International Year/Letter Designations for Animal Identification
- Calving Records
- Updated Quality Assurance Guidelines

- Injection Site Quality Control
- Health Records
- Pasture Usage
- SPA (Standardized Performance Analysis) performance measures
- Cattle Sales
- AI Breeding Records
- Analysis of Calving Activity

The cost of the IRM book is \$5.75, order IRM red book through your Regional Extension centers by Aug. 29. Area centers include: Mitchell (sdsu.mitchell.center@sdsu.edu, 605-995-7378) and Sioux Falls (sdsu.siouxfalls.center@sdsu.edu, 605-782-3290).

When ordering, provide name, address, email address, phone number as well as the quantity requested. Payment will be asked for by Oct. 10. IRM book should arrive by Nov. 1.

Labor Day Deadlines

The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan will be closed Monday, September 3, for the Labor Day holiday.

The following deadlines will apply:

Out On The Town — Noon, Wednesday, August 29
Tuesday, September 4 newspaper — 5 p.m., Wednesday, August 29
Wednesday, September 5 newspaper — 5 p.m., Thursday, August 30
Thursday, September 6 newspaper — 5 p.m., Friday, August 31

There will be no newspaper on Monday, September 3, 2012

YANKTON DAILY
PRESS&DAKOTAN

Farm, Ranch and Range
MANAGEMENT SEMINARS
SDSU PAVILION @ DAKOTAFEST
August 21-23
DROUGHT DEFENSE STRATEGIES
EXPERT PROFIT TIPS & ADVICE
SOYBEAN DAY
Tuesday, August 21 | 10:00 – 11:00 am
From lab to the farm – applying ag research to your operation.
★ Buyung Hadi - SDSU Extension Urban Entomology
★ Mike Moechnig - SDSU Extension Weed Specialist
★ Bob Thaler - SDSU Extension Swine Specialist
★ Gregg Carlson - SDSU Professor of Plant Science
CORN DAY
Wednesday, August 22 | 10:45 – 11:45 am
Marketing, management and policy considerations for corn crops.
★ Frayne Olson - NDSU Extension Grain Marketing Specialist
★ Darrell Mark - SDSU Economics Adjunct Professor
★ Matthew Diersen - SDSU Extension Risk Management Specialist
★ Tim Petry - NDSU Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist
BEEF DAY
Thursday, August 23 | 10:00 - 11:00 am
Managing your enterprise in a disrupted cattle cycle.
★ Darrell Mark - SDSU Economics Adjunct Professor
★ Mark Grussing - VP Branch Manager, First Dakota National Bank
★ Matthew Diersen - SDSU Extension Risk Management Specialist
★ Warren Rusche - SDSU Extension Cow/Calf Field Specialist
SDSU Extension
Dakotafest
RMA

Peloton
Physical Therapy
1101 Broadway • Suite 115B
(Morgen Square)
605-260-5003
Michelle Tieszen, PT
Matt Dvorak, PT
YOUR NEWEST CHOICE FOR PHYSICAL THERAPY SERVICES
• STATE OF THE ART PRIVATE CLINIC • WE ACCEPT INSURANCE CO-PAYS