

Scouting silage corn: Advice, tips for a successful season

INDIANAPOLIS — When scouting cornfields this summer, don't forget your silage crops. Monitoring silage fields for weeds, diseases and insects and then taking proper corrective action can help maximize forage quality and tonnage at harvest time.

"You get one chance to plant each year and do it right," said Jon Erickson, customer agronomist at Mycogen Seeds. "When growing corn for silage, it's important to preserve the quality of the entire plant, including leaves, stalks and ears."

"That's why scouting silage corn fields is just as important, if not more so, than scouting grain corn and soybean fields."

To start with, Erickson says it's a good idea to evaluate weed pressure.

Weeds can rob yield and forage quality, especially in developing corn.

Early weed control with a residual herbicide helps give silage corn a strong start and helps protect the yield potential of the crop.

In addition, growers should look for signs of insect and disease problems, which also can impact yield potential.

Corn leaves that are in good condition deliver greater tonnage at harvest and are more easily digested.

Early scouting may be able to help catch insect and disease damage before it is too severe to treat, relative to preestablished treatment thresholds.

Regarding insects, Erickson suggests monitoring growing degree days and note when insects start showing up, as this is a key time for scouting.

Also check out a state or local pest bulletin to know which insects could be a problem in your geography.

Planting varieties with built-in insect protection like Herculex I Insect Protection, Herculex Xtra Insect Protection or SmartStax technology can prevent damage from a broad-spectrum of insects before it starts.

Diseases that cause the most economic damage to silage include gray leaf spot, northern and southern corn leaf blight, eye spot and corn leaf rust.

Erickson said he recommends scouting for diseases approximately 10 days before tasseling begins.

"If you're not sure what to look for, many universities offer disease identification guides that can be found online," says Erickson. "Mycogen Seeds offers several silage hybrids that have been bred for tolerance to various diseases."

Mycogen brand Silage-Specific TMF silage hybrids have excellent disease tolerance and BMR hybrids also offer some tolerance.

However, it is still important to "You get one chance to plant each year and do it right. When growing corn for silage, it's important to preserve the quality of the entire plant, including leaves, stalks and ears."

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—Jon Erickson, Mycogen Seeds

monitor fields and use a fungicide treatment if thresholds are reached for the individual disease that may be present in a particular field.

Erickson says if a problem is spot-

ted, it is important to take immediate action.

Two classes of fungicides used to treat the most common diseases in corn are triazoles and strobilurins.

If a fungicide treatment becomes necessary, growers should keep in mind that micronutrients and/or insect control products can be added to those applications for additional benefits if needed.

"Scouting fields planted for corn silage is time well spent and can have a significant impact on yield and quality," Erickson said. "There are a lot of resources available to growers to assist in their scouting efforts, including consulting with a Mycogen Seeds sales rep or customer agronomist."

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