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News Release

Majority of Small Grain-Producing States Had Light ‘Scab’ Year in 2011

The majority of U.S. wheat- and barley-producing states enjoyed a calm year in terms of Fusarium Head Blight incidence and severity. But not all. As always, growing season weather played an important role in disease incidence and severity, or lack thereof.

Commonly referred to as “scab,” Fusarium Head Blight, caused by the fungus *Fusarium graminearum*, can produce significant yield losses, as well as serious grain quality issues due to the presence of the mycotoxin known as “DON” (deoxynivalenol).

A recent survey of university small grains specialists by the U.S. Wheat & Barley Scab Initiative (USWBSI) found growers had very few problems with the disease this year in eastern states like New York, Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia. The exception was Pennsylvania, where central and southern wheat counties in particular incurred very serious levels of infection.

Southern states (Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas) reported low incidence of scab this year in their wheat crops, as growing season weather was not conducive to its development

Ohio’s wheat producers suffered high scab levels in 2010. This year, while the disease was again present around the state, incidence and severity levels were substantially lower. Most other Midwest states incurred even less Fusarium Head Blight than Ohio in 2011.

With the exception of certain areas of Nebraska, the Great Plains region had virtually no scab this season. The long drought that has plagued Oklahoma and parts of Kansas was a big factor in the disease’s absence.

It was a tougher scab year in the Northern Plains, however — and particularly in South Dakota. A late, wet spring, coupled with a wet and sometimes hot growing season, set the stage for problems with several foliar and head diseases, including scab.

Fortunately, scab's 2011 impact on crop yields and quality was at least partially blunted by farmers' expanding use of moderately resistant varieties, timely and effective fungicide applications, and better crop rotation. This integrated management approach has been strongly promoted by university specialists and the USWBSI.

Also, many growers and crop advisors are utilizing the FHB Alert System, a web-based prediction program designed to provide advance notice of potential outbreaks and the risk of Fusarium Head Blight in a given area. The system is hosted by the USWBSI.

Information on USWBSI-sponsored research and outreach efforts is available on the Initiative's website: www.scabusa.org. The website also carries an extensive article summarizing the 2011 scab situation around the nation.

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