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SPECIAL ISSUE: HEAD SCAB ALERT

FUSARIUM HEAD BLIGHT UPDATE
DON HERSHMAN, EXTENSION PLANT PATHOLOGIST

Fusarium head blight (FHB), also known as head scab, is now very severe in some fields. I was on a tour in Christian, Todd, and parts of southwest Logan Counties last Friday (May 21). It was very common to see fields with 30-50 percent incidence. In research plots (non-irrigated, non-inoculated) near Keysburg, in the southwest corner of Logan County, some experimental lines had an incidence of 95-100%, and severity approaching 60%. That's a lot of FHB! I have also received reports of fields with 80%+ FHB incidence in Mclean County, in the Green River Area.

At this time, I really do not know the full extent of FHB, statewide. I do not think conditions were such that we will have a statewide epidemic. I say this because I have been closely following the FHB prediction center's (http://www.wheatscab.psu.edu/) findings for over the past month. It appeared to me that most areas of the state had only brief periods of weather favorable to FHB. However, the FHB model is still under development, so actual FHB may exceed predicted FHB in some areas. In any event, if you have not looked at your wheat lately, I suggest you do so now. This late in the season, do not expect FHB incidence to increase since new infections are not likely to occur. However, severity can increase up to crop maturity.

COMMENTS BY DAVE VAN SANFORD—WHEAT PLANT BREEDER

There have been numerous reports of head scab in southern tier counties in the past few days, with estimated incidence levels as high as 90%. The question is, what should growers do?

First, keep in mind that there are no fungicide treatments that can be applied at this point to reduce the damage. Secondly, this year is completely different from last year in terms of the temperatures during grain fill. The hot weather that we have been experiencing make it more likely that scabby kernels will be shriveled, and therefore many of them will probably be blown out of the back of the combine during harvest. Third, it might pay you to inspect your fields **NOW** to get an idea of the likely level of damage. Some fields may have completely escaped infections, while others may be hard hit. This will help you to decide on how to bin your wheat, how to market it, whether to blend, etc. If you wait too long to inspect fields, however, you won't be able to see the scab symptoms.

We are very interested in obtaining samples of harvested wheat from scab-infected fields. This would help us better understand to what extent head scab and vomintoxin are a problem and the conditions that will increase their severity. We would like to know variety name, tillage used, planting date, etc. If you are willing to make samples available to us, please take about a pint size sample. Dottie Call will arrange to pick them up from you, grind them and send them off for DON analysis.
Please contact her at 270-365-7541 Ex. 234 or by e-mail: dcall@uky.edu

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