



The Chem Gro Crop Watch, Issue #2, 5/1/12

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Over-all, it's been a good start. This has been one of the most enjoyable and relaxing springs that we have had in a long time. After the last two years, we have grown accustomed to thinking that applying NH₃, spraying, and planting only occurred in a about a 2 week window of farmable (non wet) days. Now, this year, we are all sitting around with extra time on our hands; wishing we had more acres to plant or custom manage. Most of Western Illinois finally received a general .5 to 1.5 inches of rain that came slow and steady over the weekend, and it is raining as I write this update. However, we have missed many chances of rain over the last four weeks. The lack of rain has created a problem in many fields that were sprayed 3-4 weeks ago. Weed escapes!

Weed escapes. Residual herbicides are one of the most important yield protecting crop inputs that we invest into our crops. Residual herbicides are very low cost (compared to seed, fertilizer, cash rent, etc). However, residual herbicides need frequent .25 to .5 inch minimal rains to keep the top 1-2" of soil moist to allow the chemical to keep active in the soil to inhibit germination of weeds. As I mentioned earlier, me missed some very critical timely rains to keep the residual herbicides activated. Now, several fields have weed escapes growing in fields that had full rates of residuals applied! If you were to dig up these plants, you will see that the seed germinated $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1" below the soil line, which is below the herbicide residual layer. With the good soaking rain that we just received, some of the smaller weeds may die as their roots come into contact with the herbicide. However, many of the larger weeds will have enough roots below the herbicide layer and will continue growing and survive. Depending on weed pressure, it may be beneficial to clean up a few borders of fields or entire fields before the crop gets very big to minimize yield loss.



Soil Temperature Voodoo Days? Just when I thought I have seen it all..... something new and different comes along !!?? Most of you are probably much aware of the catch phrase that I use to describe bad planting dates for corn and soybeans as "Voodoo Days". These are days that may seem like ideal planting conditions, however within 48 hours after planting a cold weather front comes through and drops a large amount of cold chilling rain on helpless seeds that are trying to absorb water for germination. This cold shock of water to the embryo and crusting soils that follow usually

result in poor final stands and/or replanting. This year, *knock on wood*, we have avoided any major Voodoo Days in our geography (except for a small area surrounding the Dallas City, IL area that had a very localized down-pour of 1.5 – 2 inches of rain in about a half an hour).

The vast majority of the corn planted prior to April 7th has come up very uniform and looks great. However, corn planted April 9-11th is having some emergence issues. During April 12th-14th we received some small rain showers and also had our 3rd spring frost (if my memory serves me correct). Soil temperatures that were very warm began to drop. Emergence has been erratic, and from what I have seen the uniformity of emergence is determined by soil type and amount of organic matter. In other words, the darker the soil type (organic matter), the more heat that was absorbed and maintained into the soil created better emergence. There is no hard crust holding the seedlings from emerging. We just need more heat!



The above picture was taken from my farm. It was planted on April 10th. My soils are mostly chalk white timber soils, but for whatever the reason there is a spot about the size of a pick-up truck that has higher organic matter levels (I am guessing livestock maybe was fed there and this is the area where round bales of hay were placed for many years?) Whatever the reason, the darkness of that area absorbed more heat and you can see the corn has emerged; and the remainder of the corn in the white soil is slowly creeping its way out of the ground.

Hybrid vigor is showing some differences, too. This picture to the right was taken from our test plot planted on April 11th. It clearly shows how some hybrids have more vigor / cold tolerance for emergence in cold soils. The hybrid on the left is DeKalb 65-19 with about 95% emerged plants. The hybrid on the right is Pioneer P1319XR and is struggling to be 50% emerged.



Black Cutworm. I have found black cutworm feeding on corn that did not have a preventive insecticide applied. The larva ranged from ¼ -5/8” in length. With the 70-80 degree temps that we are to get this week, black cutworm will become very active and hungry! This will be a good week do some field scouting when the rains stop.

That’s my 2 cents worth.....the choice and decision is always yours.

Lonne