

## The Latest on Controlling Soybean Aphids

*By Laura Paine, Crops and Soils Agent*

The soybean aphid seems to be here to stay and researchers, consultants, ag suppliers, and growers have been working hard to get a handle on how to control this pest. We've learned a lot in two short growing seasons, but there's still a lot to learn.

One of the most important studies conducted last summer focused on the effects of cultural practices on aphid populations. Researcher John Gaska and his colleagues at the UW-Soybean Research and Extension Program looked at planting dates, row spacings, and plant populations, among other things, and found some cost-free methods to reduce the risk of crop damage from aphids. Here is what they found:

- ▶ **Plant early.** Their May 9<sup>th</sup> planting date had little colonization by soybean aphids and populations on these plots remained low throughout the season, with or without sprays. Yields were 7 to 10 bushels higher than the May 29<sup>th</sup> and June 7<sup>th</sup> planting dates.
- ▶ **Plant populations.** Higher plant populations (250,000 seeds/acre for 7.5 inch rows; 175,000 seeds/acre for 30 inch rows) were associated with lower aphid populations. Plant density seems to be inversely correlated with the aphids' ability to find their way into the canopy.
- ▶ **Row spacing.** Differences between drilled and row beans were less clear-cut, but the drilled plots tended to have lower aphid populations later in the season, and generally had higher yields.
- ▶ **Spray timing.** A number of studies and observations were made on timing of sprays and economic thresholds. We still don't have a good handle on the timing of sprays. The replicated studies that were conducted showed that multiple sprays (4 to 6 sprays in June and July) were most effective but not economical. In terms of timing a single spray for the greatest effect, late July or early August applications seemed to bring aphid populations down most dramatically, at least last summer. This will be very dependent on the weather, however, and scouting is going to be critical in proper timing. Timing sprays to coincide with populations of around 100 or more aphids per trifoliolate is probably going to have the best effect.

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