

Scouting For Soybean Aphids

Low levels of soybean aphids have begun to show up in some areas of Wisconsin. At the time of this writing, aphid numbers have been staying low in the surrounding states as well.

All available research data from four Universities in the Upper Midwest suggests that an economic benefit occurs when an insecticide is applied to soybeans with 250 aphids per plant with populations that are actively increasing.

Soybean producers should start a regular schedule for scouting soybean aphids. Soybean fields must be walked at least once a week and preferably twice a week to accurately document whether the population is actively increasing.

Natural enemies (lady beetles and parasitic wasps), temperature, planting date, aphid fungal disease, soybean growth stage and perhaps soybean variety all play a role in regulating soybean aphid populations. Regular scouting will help determine how these factors are influencing aphid growth rates under field conditions.

The threshold described above has a 5 to 7 day application window built into it to allow for arrangements to make the application. That is why it is critical to know if the population is actively increasing or not. If the populations of aphids 5 to 7 days after 250 aphids per plant is first observed is only 200 to 300 aphids per plant, there is not likely to be an economic benefit to an application. However, if the populations are actively increasing, odds are 5-7 days after the threshold is reached you will be at 1,000 to 2,000 aphids per plant, and that is when you want to be IN THE FIELD with the sprayer.

Soybean aphids are usually found on the underside of leaves, on new growth at the top and side branches, and can be distributed on leaf petioles and stems under heavy infestation. The insects are small (1/16"), soft-bodied, with wings or wingless. They are yellow in color early in the season. Winged adults have a black head and thorax. When scouting, producers should walk in a W-shaped pattern across the field stopping to take whole plant counts on 20 to 30 plants throughout the field

For more information contact the Polk County Extension Office at 715-485-8600. An excellent bulletin is available at no charge that can assist you with visually estimating the number of aphids per plant.