

News Column

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FREE SCN TESTING

My son, a senior in high school, is planning to attend Kansas State University and has known that for many years. Yet, he is contemplating taking visits to some other school so he can get the free T-shirts.

Ryan is a product of his genetics. His grandfathers on both sides of the family were farmers who would both be 93 years old now if they were still living. They farmed through some lean years and knew how to manage money.

I doubt that either of Ryan's grandfathers ever turned down a free hat from a seed company – they liked free stuff too. I also like free stuff and I must have passed that gene right along to Ryan.

We're going to see how much Ryan really likes free stuff in a couple of weeks, after the soybeans are harvested in the field south of our house. I'm going to hand him a soil probe and let him collect a sample so we can test for soybean cyst nematode (SCN).

The K-State Plant Disease Diagnostic lab is offering free SCN testing for Kansas producers. The money is coming from a grant, and that grant will expire, so this is the year to test,...while the test is still free.

Fall is the time to test for soybean cyst nematode, right after soybean harvest. The sampling procedure is much like collecting a soil sample for fertility analysis. Probe 10 to 20 random spots in each field to a depth of six to eight inches. Then mix all that soil together and

put about a pint in a bag to take to the lab. A sandwich bag holds about the right amount of soil.

When collecting samples for SCN analysis we like to probe right in the recently harvested rows to give the best chance of detecting nematodes, if they are present. After collection, samples should be refrigerated until they are shipped to the lab, then they should be sent by overnight delivery if shipped.

Since we are right here close to Manhattan, it makes more sense to deliver samples to the lab in Throckmorton Hall instead of shipping them. However, they still need to be kept cool before shipping. Don't throw them on the dash of your pickup to bake for several hours before heading to town.

You'll need a Plant Disease Diagnostic Check Sheet to submit with your sample. You can either Google the diagnostic lab to get the form, or give us a call at 785/537-6350 and we'll hook you up.

Now that we have established that you are getting something for free, why would you even want it? What is soybean cyst nematode and why do we want to test for it?

Soybean cyst nematode is a serious problem in many central and eastern Kansas fields. It is a microscopic roundworm that attacks soybean roots, sometimes resulting in dwarfed, yellow plants that can be detected from a distance, but more often robbing yields without any visual signs of being present in a field.

SCN is carried from field to field on soil particles and can be moved within a field by soil movement during rainfall, by tillage, or even by wildlife. The best management practices are the use of SCN resistant varieties, and crop rotation.

The first step though is determining if you have SCN in a field, and now – right after soybean harvest – is the time to collect soil samples for testing.

If you have questions, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. Or, you can send e-mail to gmcclure@ksu.edu.

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