

# AGFAX: SOUTHERN GRAIN

Corn • Soybeans • Wheat • Grain Sorghum

## FEBRUARY 8, 2008

Here is our first AgFax: Southern Grain for 2008. Our thanks to **FMC Corporation** for sponsoring our early-season issues. Subscriptions can be requested at [www.agfax.com](http://www.agfax.com).

## GRAIN CROP NOTES

**Based on Extension reports** this week (see below), the wheat crop is progressing well across much of the region.

**Corn planting will get underway shortly** in the lower South. Some silage corn planting already has started in Florida, according to one report today. Steve Shutz, consultant in Coushatta, La., said that burndown treatments had started in his area.

**Much of the wheat crop in the Southern Plains** is short on moisture, based on reports this week from Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas.

## MISS. NAMES SOYBEAN SPECIALIST

**Trey Koger** has been named Mississippi's new state soybean Extension specialist. Koger has a 100% Mississippi State-Extension Service assignment, with responsibility for coordinating educational programs for soybeans and other oilseed crops, according to Michael Collins, head of MSU's

thus far this spring, but we expect a lot of N to be applied in the next 10 to 14 days, especially if the weather warms up. There hasn't been a whole lot in the way of insects or diseases. Some green bugs were found in wheat plots at Starkville earlier this week by Angus Catchot (Extension Entomologist), and they're potentially more damaging than some of the other species of aphids, so we need to be checking. In December, rust was showing up in some wheat fields. Normally, it comes later, but December was much warmer than usual. We don't really know which type of rust it was, and we expect that cold weather in January halted development. If it did successfully overwinter, then it may flare up when conditions turn warmer over the next several weeks. Normally, we don't treat for rust until the leaves emerge. If it turns out to be stripe rust – typically a more aggressive rust pathogen – it might be necessary to treat heavy infestations to keep plants alive until all the leaf tissue emerges. That would be in a worst-case situation, which we certainly have not seen.”

**Dewey Lee, Georgia Extension Grain Specialist:** “We're just right at greenup. Most of our growers either initiated their first split application several weeks ago or are beginning a single full N application now. They've either finished weed

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plant and soil science department.

Koger has been serving as the cotton weed scientist and agronomist at Mississippi State's Delta Research And Extension Center at Stoneville. He holds a PhD in weed science from MSU and received his undergrad and MS degree from Oklahoma State.

## CROP REPORTS

**Erick Larson, Mississippi Extension Grain Specialist:** “Conditions have been quite wet during the last several weeks, plus it's been relatively cool until earlier this week. We haven't really done a lot of herbicide or nitrogen applications

control or are trying to wind up any kind of weed control, too. Anyone starting now is a little behind. Rainy weather kept us out of the field for the last two to three weeks, which has delayed some weed control measures.

“Growers also are finding in some cases that they have aphid populations that require control measures, so they're including a pyrethroid. High wheat prices are promoting a good deal of attention and close management. I was at a lunch meeting today (Thursday) and was asked if the yield response would be worth it if it became necessary to fly on an insect control treatment. At these prices, it's more than justified and would

(Continued)

likely make money. We're seeing more aphids in our wheat in a number of areas and need to control them because of barley oat virus. We often tend to find more aphids in smaller fields that are bordered by areas that provide overwintering habitat. A 150-acre field out in the open, for example, may have less pressure than a 40-acre field that's enclosed by tree lines and other vegetation.

"We're not overly concerned about the size of wheat right now. Wheat planted in a timely manner is larger and tillered extremely well if good fertilizer management was practiced in the fall. That wheat, on average, is about six inches tall and has good growth. We're soon going into that period when the ear primordial begins developing, and those cells will be laid down over the next few weeks. So, we don't need a fertilizer shortfall at that point. We've got to get top dressing finished. If it hasn't gone out yet, that should be a priority. Flying on the fertilizer at this point is not cost prohibitive if it's too wet to do it with ground equipment. If a grower has to do that, he can make a very timely application now and follow up with a ground application in a few weeks. That would spread out the risk in case of excessive rain or cold snaps.

"Growers need to get their corn seed orders finalized if they haven't already done so. A Pioneer rep said today that some dairy silage corn planting had already started in Florida."

**Edward Twidwell, Louisiana Extension Wheat Specialist:** "A lot of producers are topdressing wheat. That's probably the biggest thing going right now. In January, we had a fair amount of rain off and on, but it's dry enough now that most producers can apply fertilizer. The next 7 to 10 days are suppose to have highs in the range of 65 to 70 degrees, and wheat will probably move along pretty good. We haven't seen too many problems. The wheat really looks good around the state. It's a little further along than we would like to see where growers planted earlier than we would recommend. The only wheat that looks bad is typically where it shouldn't have been planted. Some of those areas stayed wet, and the wheat looks pretty thin."

**Randy Weisz, North Carolina Extension Wheat Specialist:** "The crop is all over the board in terms of development. Folks who planted either on time or nearly on time probably have good stands, with some even worrying about wheat being too far along with all the warm weather. Folks who planted at the last minute with whatever seed they could find are at the opposite end of the scale. Plants are small and stands are thin. In the Coastal Plains and Tidewater, we're seeing a lot of yellow spots due to either manganese deficiency or Hessian fly. This is more of both than I've seen in a long time. We're try-

ing to make growers aware of this. There's still time to correct manganese deficiency, but we have to get on it.

"This is the time when growers need to think about getting an early split of nitrogen on thin wheat. On the other hand, if they have wheat that looks good and is tillered well, they need to avoid putting on N until at least some time in early March. One of our concerns right now is that people are saying, 'This wheat looks really good. I'm going to get all the N on it right away.' If they do that, it could set them up for taking a lot of freeze damage if cold weather hits between now and mid March. We've been getting some rain, although we remain in a drought and our long-term moisture situation still doesn't look that good. But the ground is wet right now, and wheat is growing."

**Chris Main, Tennessee Extension Wheat Specialist:** "Scouts are looking for aphids and other pests but aren't finding anything right now. Some people are probably starting to do fertilizer applications, especially if this nice weather holds up into the weekend. Late sprays for ryegrass and henbit are going out now. So far, the wheat I've seen looks average or better. It looks about like it did last year at this time. I haven't seen too much that's ahead in terms of development. We've had warm days here and there but no periods of a week or more of warm conditions, so nothing is really progressing toward jointing."

**Jason Kelley, Arkansas Extension Grain Specialist:** "Wet weather delayed planting until November for many producers across the state, with 50% of the crop planted in November. A mild November and a relatively mild winter has allowed late-planted wheat to do a considerable amount of growing and tillering, and at this point it looks excellent in most cases. Spring nitrogen topdressing time is now upon us. With the high price of fertilizer this year, some producers may want to cut fertilizer rates to save money. However, in light of current grain prices, I believe cutting back on fertilizer would be the wrong thing to do. With grain prices at these levels, it does not take much of a yield response to get your fertilizer money back."

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