

Tar Spot...

My thoughts going forward
Devin Helming – 10/10/22

Now that we've made it through a full season, I want to give my 2 cents on what I saw in our area and my outlook for 2023 and beyond.

Prior to 2022

We've heard about Tar Spot for the past couple years with the drumbeat getting louder each year. Prior to 2022 I had only read about it and talked with people that had seen it. It was present in our area but very light in pressure. In fact, unless you were on a dedicated mission to find lesions you probably did not see any. Seed catalogs didn't offer much regarding Tar Spot.



The year 2022

I kicked off the year with an informational meeting that was very well presented by Daren Mueller, ISU plant pathologist.

Throughout the growing season we continued to monitor Tar Spot pressure, but it remained quite low or absent in most fields. A significant number of growers sprayed fungicide on their corn which is labeled to control Tar Spot in addition to our other common leaf diseases.

Everything changed about 2 weeks ago when plant health started to fade. Now, most fields have Tar Spot lesions today. I included some pictures I have taken over the past week to illustrate what I'm seeing. Not all fields have this many lesions, but most fields do have varying degrees of pressure and I did not have to work hard to find these pictures. I did venture as far north as an hour into central MN and am finding lesions there.



Yield impact minimal in 2022 for our area

My assessment for 2022 is that there is very little yield impact in our area. We were well into milk line development before any significant Tar Spot lesions were obvious. Our neighbors just east of I-35 however feel they will have some fields impacted by Tar Spot if they weren't treated by fungicide. In my opinion, what our neighbors to the east saw this year is a leading indicator of what we can expect to see next year.

Sky is not falling

While Tar Spot is a threat we need to manage, we have tools available today. Our fungicides on the market are an effective means of control especially the "top shelf" fungicides with multiple modes of action and longer residuals. Additionally, Pioneer has hybrid rankings on Tar Spot and fortunately we have a good lineup of options with some built in tolerance.

2023 and beyond

At this point my gameplan is as follows for managing Tar Spot

- Identify highest risk farms
- Utilize a hybrid with suitable tolerance
- Plan on applying a "top shelf" fungicide 10 days after tassel

I reserve the right to adjust my gameplan at halftime if the other team has the advantage (lesions showing up early, for example).

Final thoughts

At my continuing education meetings, the experts do mention the need to manage for fungicide resistance. We have some things going for us in that our current tools have multiple modes of action and the fact that not every acre gets a fungicide. However, we would be wise to not simply apply the same solution to every acre, every year. I don't have major concerns about this, but it's a good thing to have on our radar.



Reach out with questions.