

Knowing Your Corn Hybrid Strengths and Weaknesses

After a slow start, corn planting has almost caught up to normal levels for mid-May and, with warmer temperatures, corn is now emerging everywhere. Farmers have invested heavily in seed technologies that will protect the plants from many insect pests and may be tempted to not scout fields as thoroughly as they may have done in the past. There are so many different traits and trait packages being offered, it is easy to lose track of what specific protection you have purchased, and with the way this year is starting off, that could be very important.

The wet spring delayed many field operations and allowed many fields to “green-up” with weeds. This can make the fields more attractive to armyworm and black cutworm moths looking for a place to lay their eggs. Heavy armyworm flights have been reported in Kentucky and southern Illinois. Several “intense” black cutworm moth flights have been recorded in Illinois this spring. My colleague, Robert Bellm, caught a personal overnight record of 14 moths on April 13th in Madison County. You can see the results from other traps in Illinois at the University of Illinois Pest Monitoring Network website <http://pmn.ipm.illinois.edu>, and check “the Bulletin” weekly for specific warning and recommendations <http://bulletin.ipm.illinois.edu>.

Be aware that large numbers of cutworms can overwhelm the protection of some traits.

Entomologists at Michigan State and Wisconsin have produced an aptly named “Handy Bt Trait Table”. The internet address for the site is incredibly long so I recommend just doing a Google search for “Handy Bt Trait Table”. There is a lot of useful information in their table. It lists each package by the marketing name that is listed by the companies. It includes the specific

proteins produced. The chart doesn't just list the insects; it indicates whether they are controlled or suppressed. It also indicates whether any herbicide traits are included and the refuge requirements. It really is a handy Bt trait table.

With corn prices as high as they are, there is tremendous revenue potential in the fields. Time spent scouting is an important investment you can make in protecting your profit potential. Knowing the weaknesses of your hybrids can help you maximize your time spent scouting.