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Rice Update
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Weather this week has still been humid with mild temperatures. For most of the week we have been blessed with some sunshine. Scattered rain showers were received across the Delta Friday afternoon and evening. USDA reported this week that the rice crop rates as 9% fair, 65% good, and 26% excellent. USDA also estimates that over 20% of the crop is heading.

With the wet/humid weather and mild temperatures over the previous couple of weeks, neck blast has been identified in some fields of rice grown to Wells. This disease is not common year-end and year-out through Mississippi. However, with favorable weather conditions for blast (as observed over the last two weeks), this disease has shown up in Mississippi.

Ideal conditions for neck blast are humid air, long dew periods, frequent light showers, and can be found more pronounced in areas that are shaded or more protected by trees. Neck blast can be found more easily where excess N rates have been used or rice planted on very fertile soil (ie. "Cotton Soil"). Also, research has shown that maintaining a deep flood (> 4") can reduce the risk of blast.

Another key component in neck blast is variety susceptibility. The most reliable information on variety susceptibility to neck blast comes from the University of Arkansas. They rate the following common varieties grown in Mississippi as follows: Francis, Very Susceptible; Wells, Susceptible; CL 161, Susceptible; CL 171 AR, Moderately Susceptible; Sabine, Moderately Susceptible; Cocodrie, Moderately Susceptible; and all hybrids, resistant to moderately resistant.

The only neck blast that I have seen is in three areas in the northern Sunflower County area and they were planted to Wells. Yesterday, I scouted several fields, plots and demonstrations that were planted to either Wells or CL 161 and could not find the presence of this disease.

Scouting for this disease is very critical in the late boot stages of rice. I would begin scouting along turn-rows and around tree lines. I would look for lesions around the collar region and on leaves down in the canopy. The lesions will be oval to diamond shaped with a reddish-brown border as depicted in the photographs below.

Fungicides such as Quadris and Stratego have shown to be effective for preventing neck blast. These fungicides have to be used in a preventative approach because they have no curative action against neck blast (ie. once the panicle is infected, it cannot prevent it from progressing). Therefore, to prevent neck blast a fungicide application will need to be made prior to seed head emergence and another application may be necessary 7 days later to protect any late emerging heads, if the weather is ideal for neck blast. For preventing neck blast, Quadris would need to be applied at 12.3 fl oz/A or Stratego would need to be applied at 19 fl oz/A. Stratego cannot be applied after seed head emergence.

What everyone wants to know right now is do I need to make a fungicide application for neck blast or not. Here is what I would do:

- 1) Scout all fields that are planted to a susceptible variety, such as Wells or Francis. I have not found any blast in fields planted to CL 161. However, I would closely monitor these fields as well. Scout for any lesions at the collar region or on any leaves down in the canopy. If lesions can be found, I would consider making an application of Stratego at the

boot split timing to prevent any possible blast problem. If the weather turns to more of a rainy period during heading a second fungicide application of Quadris may be necessary.

- 2) If a susceptible variety is planted on silt-loam to sandy soils, monitor these fields very closely. These soils are often very fertile with native nitrogen which can make the rice more susceptible to the disease.
- 3) Monitor contour leveed fields closely, especially planted to a susceptible variety. It can be sometimes hard to manage a deep flood on these fields which would make them more susceptible to the disease.
- 4) Watch the weather. As of today, the weather is sunny with temperatures in the 90° F range, which makes the environment less favorable for neck blast. If weather turns to more frequent rain showers or heavy dews for period of time, the disease may become more pronounced again.

Hopefully, this has gave you some information to go by. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to get in contact with me for any further information at any time.

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