

BATTLE RIVER AGRONOMY UPDATE

WEED CONTROL

With harvest now in full swing, everybody is spending a lot of time on the sprayers, swathers and combines. This is a great opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of some of the weed control products that were used this year. Based on what I was seeing in my scouting this year, particular attention should be paid to wild oat control. There are a lot of fields that are showing significant breakthrough of wild oats this year. While some of it can be attributed to timing issues, the possibility of resistance cannot be overlooked. If wild oats are scattered throughout the field, you are likely looking timing issues. If, however the general control is reasonable, but there are heavy patches of wild oats, you may be looking at resistance issues. Where wild oat control was less than ideal this year, consider fall application of Avadex or Fortress to help shake up your herbicide groupings and get a jump on next year's problems.

FERTILITY

With commodity prices in a downward trend, it is important to evaluate every dollar spent for the upcoming crop. There is an excellent article in the Grainnews by Les Henry, titled "A Word about Micronutrients", which should be a must read for anybody pre buying fertilizer this fall. If you are considering purchasing macronutrients that incorporate micronutrients in them, you need to compare them to the base macronutrient product, so you can see just how much the micros are costing you. In good times, when everybody is trying to extract that extra 5% yield, it makes sense to see what micros can do for us. When commodity prices are low, we need to make sure that the limited budget goes to maximizing returns – in other words, see that the crop has its basic nutrient requirements covered. I'm not saying there is no place for micros, because if there is a deficiency the crop will respond. Just make sure there is a need before investing in them. A word of caution – I also saw instances this year where micros were applied as a foliar spray based on tissue testing only. Micronutrients can be present in the soil, yet not picked up by the plants for a variety of reasons. It is very common for micros that are immobile in the soil to show up as deficient in the plants when soils are cold, for example. When the soil warms up, this temporary deficiency will disappear. By not having a soil test to back up the tissue test, we can never know if the micronutrient deficiency was transient due to environmental conditions, or a result of soil conditions that need to be addressed. Always try to do a soil test along with a tissue test so that you have all the info you need to make long term management decisions.