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A LITTLE BIT COUNTRY
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Late Planting of Wheat

The unusually cool and wet conditions during May have resulted in some late crop plantings. Some acres are yet to be planted and may not be planted.

It is generally thought that the first week of June marks the end of wheat planting in the Northern Tier counties of North Dakota. Optimum planting dates are about one month earlier. Research has shown that the yield of wheat decreases about one percent per day delay beyond the optimum planting date.

Furthermore, planting after the last planting date increases the risk of even greater losses in yield and test weight due to the likelihood that the crop will be exposed to high temperatures during flowering and grain filling. Spring wheat requires in excess of 2800 growing degree days from planting to maturity. In most years and regions of the state, the likelihood that wheat planted before June 20th will receive 2800 growing degrees and reach maturity before the middle of September, is quite high. In abnormally cool summers, like last year, maturity may actually be pushed into October if planting occurs in mid-June. Yield losses are less with the late planted crops in cooler than normal summers, but in cool summers late planting may push maturity late enough in the fall that other critical farm operations are impacted by a late harvest. The benefits of having a crop in the field, rather than going with the prevent plant option, includes the utilization of excessive soil moisture, and more effective weed control.

The probability of producing a profitable wheat crop declines rapidly as planting is delayed beyond the middle of June.

Continued Scouting Advised

Although the threat of insects to our crops appears to be less than last year, continued vigilance is suggested especially for cutworms and alfalfa weevils.

Crop scouts are finding early season cutworms but so far the population levels have been non economic. Cool temperatures will delay cutworm development but such along with wet soil will slow plant development making the plants less able to fend off the feeding larvae. Late season cutworms like the red-backed, darksided, variegated, and black type can be threatening through the entire month of June.

It appears the first cutting of alfalfa has escaped damage by the alfalfa weevil larvae but regrowth will be susceptible. The weather has been favorable for alfalfa growth but cool enough to inhibit weevil development. The weevil larvae will start to appear at around 300 growing degree days (GDD). As of this writing (6-8-10) Williston NDAWN reported 366 GDD. The Nesson Valley, Ross and Crosby sites reported 308, 230, and 297 respectively. Major feeding by the alfalfa weevil larvae will occur from 430-595 GDD.