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**A LITTLE BIT COUNTRY
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Plant Pests Being Found

The dear ole sun finally showed his smiley face yesterday and the weatherman says we can look toward a great weekend. This should get things activated in the countryside.

Besides the good there is sometimes a little bit of peril which can dampen the spirit. Flea beetles have already been observed on volunteer canola in the Fargo and Devils Lake areas. Then there is the wheat curl mite found in volunteer spring wheat and winter wheat in counties to the east of us. This tiny insect is responsible for the transfer of the wheat streak mosaic virus (WSMV) in wheat causing a yellow to brown streaking on the leaves thus reducing the vitality of the plant.

Closer to home, there is the report of cutworms being found in the Ray area. While all three of these insects have the potential of impacting crop production in this area, I am most concerned about the cutworms. From recent experience, we know they can do significant damage in a very short period of time. While the cutworms found around Ray likely overwintered in the soil, this early appearance tells subsequent generations are likely to appear, possibly just when the tender crops have emerged making them great target for the hungry larvae.

Field scouting is critical for cutworm control. They are early season pests that feed on most of the field crops grown in North Dakota. They become active when soil temperatures are above 40° F. Crops with lower plant populations such as peas, lentil, canola and sunflowers are more susceptible to the feeding activity. However, I have seen cutworms cause significant damage to cereal crops. Emerging young plants are the most

susceptible. Injury symptoms include clipped-off plants with the larvae underneath in the soil, wilted plants or bare patches of ground in localized spots of the field. Another symptom of cutworm feeding activity in peas and lentils is finding 2, 3, or even 4 sprouts where the plant was cut off by a cutworm and then re-cut as the seedling tried to re-initiate growth. NDSU Entomologists tell us excessive cool, wet soils tend to amplify stand reduction by slowing plant development relative to cutworm feeding.

Insecticidal treatments are most effective when larvae are less than one inch and applied at night when the cutworms are above ground and actively feeding. Attacking the cutworm is a lot easier than getting rid of the wheat curl mite. However, the frustration with cutworms revolves around its feeding activity which can start as early as the first part of May and last through June.

Disease Forecasting Site Activated

The NDSU Small Grain Disease Forecasting website is now operational for 2010. This site provides information on risk of the following fungal diseases: tan spot, leaf rust, Septoria blotch and Fusarium head blight, more commonly known as scab. The risk of any of these diseases is based on environmental variables as determined by the North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network (NDAWN) weather stations. The website address is www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/cropdiseases.

Generally, the recent temperatures have been too cold for development of fungal diseases. But as temperatures warm the risk will increase, especially on wheat planted into wheat stubble.