

MB Sunflower Crop Report

Friday August 24, 2012

Crop

Sunflowers have progressed very well in the past couple of weeks. The earliest fields are approximately 2 weeks away from reaching maturity. If the weather remains warm and dry harvest could start in mid to late September. Applying a chemical desiccant could assist in plant dry down and may speed harvest up 5 to 10 days. There have been several questions about when to apply desiccant. When staging for a desiccant application, ignore the leaves and focus on the sunflower head and particularly the bracts around the head. As dry-down of the plant progresses, the bracts begin to turn brown from the bract tip towards the back of the head. When the bract is solid brown to the shoulder region of the bract, seed moisture is approximately 35% moisture or lower. This method can be used across sunflower varieties.



The bracts are still green. Too soon to spray.



The bracts have turned yellow. Too soon to spray.



Time to spray— seed moisture <35%

Disease

Rust continues to develop across the province. Rust development this late in the season does not cause economical damage. The disease is still only present low in the canopy of the sunflower crop, not affecting the upper leaves which are being used to finish seed development and maintain seed weight. New races of sunflower rust have been identified that have overcome the common resistance genes in sunflower hybrids. If a field has very high levels of rust please contact me so that it can be sampled and analyzed for rust strain.

High populations of wild sunflower are present in areas of Manitoba and Alberta. Wild sunflowers act as a host for sunflower rust causing two problems. Firstly, if the early stages of rust appear on wild sunflower the pathogen can be quickly increased, causing the disease to initiate earlier and allowing for more cycles of the disease. Secondly, presence of wild sunflower allows for new races to develop that can lead to races able to overcome the current means of resistance in hybrids.

Limiting Factor Blackbirds



Figure 1. Scout for developing head rot to determine incidence and if desiccation will be required to prevent significant losses.



Figure 2. Sunflower rust continues to develop at low levels in the low canopy of the sunflower crop.



Figure 3. Wild sunflower are a host sunflower rust.