U.S. Wheat and Barley Scab Initiative

FHB Tool Talk

Dear Extension Specialists, Crop Consultants, and Grower Organizations,

It's time to start prepping for planting season. Winter wheat and barley are usually planted in the fall after the Hessian Fly free date. Here at the USWBSI we have some planting tips to aid in managing Fusarium Head Blight (FHB).

Tip #1: Avoid planting susceptible wheat and barley varieties.
Disease management should start with variety selection as it's your best bet at reducing FHB. Agricultural land grant universities in many states conduct official variety trials and rate varietal resistance to FHB. Search your state's land grant university websites for results to determine a variety's level of resistance to FHB.

Tip #2: Practice good crop rotation with a non-host crop.
Avoid planting winter wheat and barley following corn or other small grains as these are hosts for *Fusarium graminearum*, the causal agent of FHB. These crop residues can increase population levels of the fungus in the field and increase the risk of disease developing.

- It is advised to rotate production with non-host crops (i.e., soybean or alfalfa).
- Studies from Minnesota indicate that fields previously planted with soybean had lower *Fusarium* inoculum, FHB, and deoxynivalenol (DON) compared to fields previously planted with corn or wheat.

Tip #3: FHB risk is increased when planting wheat or barley into no-till corn stubble.
While tillage does bury residue that could harbor inoculum, soil conservation approaches should be considered. No-till and reduced-tillage have become very common practices in some states and are deemed good approaches to sustain soil health and reduce soil erosion. These benefits may outweigh the benefits of inoculum reduction through the use of tillage.

- Growers are encouraged to choose a resistant variety when planting especially, in no-till or reduced-tillage production systems.

Thank you for reading!

Special thanks to Martin Chilvers, Michigan State University field crops plant pathologist, and Carl Bradley, University of Kentucky extension plant pathologist, for their expertise with this issue.

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