

TECHNICAL BULLETIN

Ear Molds in Corn

Cool moist conditions during the later part of this growing season are causing high levels of ear mold development in corn as we get closer to harvest. To minimize the risk of yield loss or potential problems with mycotoxins, corn fields should be scouted closely for signs of ear mold. If more than 10% of the ears have significant ear mold issues, the field should be harvested as early as possible and the grain dried immediately down to 15% moisture for short-term storage or 13-14% moisture for long-term storage. Cleaning grain before drying and storing can be very beneficial.

There are numerous types of ear molds which can infect corn under a wide range of environmental conditions. Identifying the specific type of ear mold present can often be difficult. Shown below are pictures and a brief description of the most common ear molds in our area (photographs courtesy of Iowa State University). Also, see the following link to a good web site on the topic;

<http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu/ohiofieldcropdisease/Mycotoxins/mycopagedefault.htm>



Fusarium Ear Rot

- Most common ear mold in the Midwest
- White, pink or salmon colored
- Infections usually scattered on the ear due to associated with injury from insects
- May produce harmful mycotoxins called fumonisins



Gibberella Ear Rot

- 2nd most common ear mold in the Midwest
- Red to pinkish colored
- Begins at the tip of the ear
- May produce harmful mycotoxins called vomitoxin and zearalenone



Diplodia Ear Rot

- White colored mold beginning at the base of the ear
- Kernels eventually turn a grayish brown color
- The entire ear can rot
- Raised black bumps appear on the husk and kernels.

George Watters, Regional Agronomist – 10/2009

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