Agronomy Profile

Ear Molds

Overview

Corn ear molds, including diplodia, gibberella and cladosporium, can lead to yield loss at harvest. If mycotoxins are present, such as with aspergillus and fusarium molds, the grain may be toxic to animals and unusable.

What you should know

- Scout for ear molds beginning at late-dent stage. Choose ears from throughout your field, pull husks back and examine each ear for rot or mold.
- To identify a disease, consider conditions in which the crop was planted, field history, husk type and environmental conditions at tasseling, silking and pollination.

Disease	Ideal environment	Husk type most susceptible	Mycotoxin potential
 Diplodia	Warm, moist conditions during silking	Loose	No
 Gibberella	Cool, moist conditions during silking	Tight	Yes
 Cladosporium	Cool, most conditions and damaged ear	Loose	No
 Fusarium	Hot, dry conditions and damaged ear	Loose	Yes
 Aspergillus	Hot, dry conditions and damaged ear, especially during pollination	N/A	Yes

Use this table to help identify the type of ear mold in your corn.

- If you can't identify the ear mold, send the entire ear to an agronomist or university agriculture extension for evaluation.

Action steps

1. **Manage moldy grain:** Moldy grain should not be stored. Grain intended for livestock feed should be tested for mycotoxins, which make it unsafe to use.
2. **Prepare for next year:** Plan ahead to avoid ear mold development next season. Rotating crops and planting a hybrid with ear rot resistance can lessen the chance of developing ear molds. Hybrids with in-plant insect protection can reduce insect damage to help prevent diseases from entering the ear.

30-Second Summary

- Properly identifying and managing ear molds can help growers avoid mycotoxin development and preserve grain yield.
- Moldy grain should not be stored.
- Insect-resistant and ear rot-resistant hybrids, and crop rotation, can help prevent ear molds from developing next season.

NOTES:

For more information, contact:

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