Agronomy Profile



Sooty mold

Overview

Sooty molds are species of secondary saprophytic fungi that feed on plant tissue. Sooty mold occurs when wet or humid conditions occur near harvest, allowing microorganisms to feed on dead plant material. It is not a major agronomic or health issue, but it can create excessive amounts of extra dust during harvest.

What you should know

- Sooty mold can develop on plant tissue that has died prematurely, such as from heat or drought stress.
- Various species of saprophytic fungi cause a black, sooty appearance. Local pathology labs can confirm specific fungal species present in your fields.
- Sooty molds can rapidly colonize dead plant tissue after rain events, especially when they are followed by prolonged humid weather and morning dews.
- The most significant problem from sooty molds is the extra dust that the fungi produce.
- Sooty molds are not harmful to humans or livestock. Grain harvested from these fields should be relatively clean.

Action steps

- 1. **Evaluate risk:** Stalk lodging could become a significant concern if harvest is significantly delayed due to sooty mold. Monitor field conditions and evaluate the risk of harvest losses due to lodged corn.
- 2. **Manage the dust:** Wear a dust mask during field scouting or harvest, especially if you have allergies or other respiratory problems. Check and clean equipment and replace filters more frequently due to the large amount of dust the molds can produce.



Corn plants with prematurely dead or dying tissue are most susceptible to sooty molds.



- Sooty mold affects corn plants, especially plants with dead tissue.
- Sooty mold can develop quickly in wet, humid conditions.
- Sooty mold is not a major agronomic or health issue.
- Sooty molds can create excessive amounts of black dust when harvesting affected cornfields.
- Manage dust by wearing a mask, cleaning filters and cleaning equipment frequently.

NOTES:

For more information, contact:



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