Agronomy Profile

Collecting nematode samples

Overview

Corn nematodes are plant parasites that exist in every field to some degree. Many species of corn nematodes feed on the plant's root system, compromising root system efficiency. Properly collecting and submitting samples for plant parasitic nematode analysis is the only way to evaluate your exposure.

What you should know

- Scouting for potential nematode problems is important, although it can be a challenge. The visual symptoms of an infestation include stunting, yellowing and root deformity, which are similar to symptoms caused by other pests or environmental stressors.
- Even without visual symptoms, nematode damage may impact crop yield. Yield loss varies by nematode species and population.
- Once infestation is diagnosed, you can determine if you need to implement any management practices.

Action steps

1. **Collect samples:** Collect from symptomatic areas of a field, including the perimeter where symptoms are less severe and nematodes are more likely to be found. Avoid sick or dead plants in the center of hot spots.
2. **Follow proper sampling protocols:**
   - Contact your local lab for sample submission requirements and fees.
   - Take samples about four to eight weeks after planting, while plants are small with shallow roots.
   - Probe through the root zone at an angle at 6 to 8 inches deep. Because corn nematodes can be found inside the root, include root material in the sample.
   - For each sample, collect approximately 20 cores; each sample should represent less than 40 acres.
   - Label samples, double-bag in sealable zipper-top bags and refrigerate until the sample is shipped. The nematodes must be alive for effective analysis.

Proper soil sampling helps diagnose corn nematode populations.

30-Second Summary

- Corn nematodes are a common issue that can impact root efficiency and yield.
- Symptoms of nematode infestation can mimic many other pests and stressors.
- Submitting samples for analysis is the only way to get an accurate assessment of nematode infestation.
- Follow proper collection procedures to get accurate samples for analysis.

NOTES:

For more information, contact:

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