

White Mold

Overview

White mold in soybeans is caused by the fungus *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*. It is not common every season, but it has been problematic since the 1990s and has become more damaging in recent years. White mold development occurs during cool, cloudy, wet, humid weather at flowering and can be devastating to soybean yields.

What you should know

- Many current practices to increase soybean yields, such as increasing plant density and canopy, increase the risk of white mold development.
- White mold causes wilting of leaves and plant death, with bleaching along the base of the stem. In moist conditions, plants develop white, cottony, mycelial growth.
- If a field has a history of white mold attacks or conditions favorable for development—wet and humid with moderate temperatures—consider reducing plant canopy size and plant density.
- Rotating to a non-host crop for two years or more reduces white mold risk. Be sure to control weeds, as many non-host crops can serve as alternative hosts for white mold.
- A no-till system minimizes disease outbreak, as tillage can bring buried sclerotia to the surface.

Action steps

1. **Choose tolerant varieties:** Choose soybean varieties with white mold tolerance, especially if planting in narrow rows or at a high population. Short-stature varieties will not increase the plant canopy.
2. **Plant later:** Early planting increases soybean yield potential due to the longer growing season, but it heightens white mold risk by increasing the plant canopy. Fields with a history of severe white mold should be planted later in the season.
3. **Space plantings:** Increase row width to reduce white mold risk.



White mold can be devastating to soybean yields.



30-Second Summary

- Management strategies that increase plant growth speed and canopy closure simultaneously increase the risk of white mold.
- White mold can be devastating to soybean yields.
- In fields with past white mold issues, planting later and increasing row spacing can reduce the risk of recurrence.

NOTES:

For more information, contact:



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