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AGRONOMY ALERT



DUSTY BLACK CORN

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Growers across the region have made comments of their combines being covered in “black dust” while harvesting their corn fields. It wasn’t until the second half of October, when the rains began to set in, that these observations started to arise.

Overall, 2020 had been relatively dry and the disease pressure on corn was relatively low. However, several farmers lately have noticed that their corn plants have begun to show a black appearance as they stand in the field. Once their combines start in the field, it seems this black “dust” rolls off the plants, cover the machinery, and resulting in what looks like a cloud of smoke. This has raised many concerns, as we are familiar in past years, with late season health issues. The most likely cause of this recent occurrence is the recent rains. Certain fungal spores can colonize on dead plant tissue under the right conditions; cool and damp environments in which we have seen lately. These spores originate from harmless fungi that do not usually affect the plant health or grain quality. Most of these spores cause a cosmetic issue, which ultimately results in a lot of questions. Luckily, the spores causing the black “dust” like covering are not expected to cause any damage and require no management going forward.

