



# David's Desk

*An update on soybean health issues from  
David Wright, Ph.D., NCSRP Director of Research*

## Planting dates & seeding rates

Optimal soybean planting dates vary from year to year with the weather. In general, however, research is showing us that planting earlier can help increase yield – provided your seedbed is in good shape.

Three decades of planting date studies in Iowa show that the most favorable planting time for soybeans is from the last week of April through mid-May.

Similarly, Illinois planting date studies suggest that planting the last week of April isn't too early, and that there's not much yield loss expected if you can't plant until mid-May.

A two-year Wisconsin study shows an average yield loss of 0.4 bushels per acre per day when soybean planting is delayed past the first week in May.

In addition, a seven-year seed company study at multiple locations throughout the Northern and Central Corn Belt also shows that yield is maximized when soybeans are planted from mid-April through mid-May.

In contrast, planting early in Kansas depends on your topsoil. The deeper the topsoil, the lower the risk of early planting. (In the Prairie Region with clay pan soils – where the majority of soybeans are grown – there are some areas with only 4 to 5 inches of topsoil, which can only store about 2 inches of moisture.)

## A good seedbed

Just about all agronomists agree that the calendar isn't as critical as the condition of your seedbed. It's more important to plant in good conditions; little is gained from planting early if it's too wet or muddy.

If you do find yourself planting early in cold, wet and poorly drained soils, or if there's a history of seedling diseases in your fields, consider a fungicide seed treatment to protect your stand. Fungicide treated seed may be beneficial in reduced- and no-till fields too, as well as when you're planting seed with a low germination rate or low seed vigor.

## Seeding rates

Checkoff-funded researchers also have spent several years studying seeding rates and plant populations. Their findings: Planting more seed as insurance seldom pays off in higher yields. And with the price of seed, that's very expensive insurance.

Seeding rates will vary depending on seed quality, row spacing, whether you use a planter or drill, whether you irrigate, and where you farm. (Check with your agronomist to help you determine optimal seeding rates.) What all the university agronomists agree on, however, is that dropping 225,000 to 250,000 seeds per acre is way too high.

**That's your soybean checkoff.  
Delivering results.**

