

Aphids discovered in Wisconsin

Paul Haag first detected soybean aphids on July 20, 1995, in two separate fields in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. A crop consultant in southern Wisconsin, Haag says he was out scouting for late Water Hemp, when he first noticed aphid damage.

“Both the areas were lighter colored and the leaves were wrinkled. And both were on lighter soil types that would typically show drought stress first within the fields,” he adds. “At the time, I didn’t know what I was dealing with, but I recorded in my crop monitoring notes a sickening sweet smell in the damaged areas.”

For the next three years, he didn’t see anything unusual in his clients’ soybeans. “I purposely re-checked the areas that were damaged in 1995, and found no noticeable crop injury.” Then in 1999, “There was damage again from aphids, and you could see sooty mold on some fields in Jefferson County.”

In 2000, Haag ran a few spray trials on his clients’ farms where he saw aphid pressure. “I saw an average yield advantage of five to six bushels on the treated acres.”

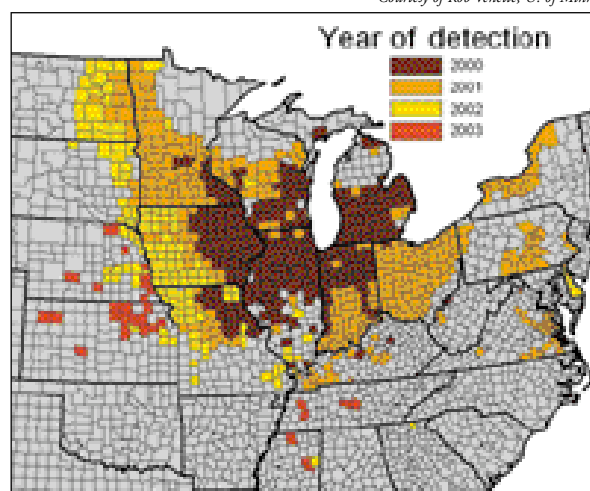
He treated about 85 percent of his clients’ soybean acreage during the outbreak of 2001, and also conducted two application trials in Jefferson County.

Aphids confirmed in 2000

Craig Grau, a plant pathologist at the University of Wisconsin, also had spent a couple of years noticing strange things in his soybean test plots. “In 1999, I was researching whether to spray leaf hoppers. We were improving yield with insecticides, but didn’t know why,” he says. “In retrospect, we believe soybean aphids were present.”

Entomologists initially thought they were melon aphids, but by 2000, they were officially identified as soybean aphids.

Courtesy of Rob Venette, U. of Minn.



Where they’ve been found Soybean aphids are radiating out from the Midwest, spreading east, west and south. Hot spots in 2003 included Minnesota, southern Wisconsin, northeast Iowa and northwest Indiana – all areas where buckthorn is prevalent. Soybean aphids overwinter on common buckthorn.

NCSRP steps up

At that point, soybean growers directing the North Central Soybean Research Program (NCSRP) launched an aggressive, multi-year initiative to fund research on soybean aphid. It’s a good thing they acted fast.

By 2003, the soybean aphid had expanded to 21 states and three Canadian provinces. And they’re likely to keep expanding. Aphid populations can double every two to three days under optimal conditions, and data indicate that an aphid infestation front can move three to six miles a day – and up to 600 miles a year.