

Dealing with Diplodia ear rot—Kiersten Wise and Charles Woloshuk

We have had many questions about Diplodia ear rot over the last several weeks. In response to these questions, we are reprinting an article originally published in the September 18th Purdue Pest and Crop Newsletter:

Scouting reports across Indiana indicate that Diplodia ear rot is present in Indiana fields. Many areas of Indiana had wet weather at and during silking, which favors infection by the fungus causing Diplodia ear rot, *Stenocarpella maydis*. In susceptible hybrids, substantial yield losses can occur. The fungus can infect plants through the husk or the shank, and rot the ear before corn is fully mature. Infected ears often have bleached husks with tiny black specks, which are the spore producing pycnidia. Removal of the husk of an infected ear will reveal white fuzzy growth of the pathogen between the kernels, which often starts at the base of the ear (Figure 1). The cob can also appear rotted. In the US, mycotoxins have not been associated with Diplodia ear rot; however, feeding value and storability of the grain is reduced with infection. It is important to properly store grain damaged by Diplodia ear rot. Drying grain to 15 percent moisture after harvest and cooling and storing infected grain below 50°F will prevent further growth of the fungus. The best way to manage Diplodia ear rot is to avoid planting susceptible hybrids, and avoid corn-on-corn rotations or planting into corn residue. For more information on Diplodia ear rot, please read the Purdue Extension bulletin, Diplodia ear rot at: <http://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/BP/BP-75-W.pdf>

Figure 1. Diplodia ear rot on corn (Picture courtesy G. Shaner)

