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CASWELL TOBACCO EXTENSION NOTES

Early Summer 2015 Season

Hello again,

I think the tobacco crop has gotten off to a good start in most areas. However, the weather conditions have been extremely variable across the State.

The Piedmont has been historically dry in some areas for the 5-6 weeks prior to this week. In the east, some areas have had excessive rainfall, some have had "normal" rainfall, and others have been somewhat dry.

With the range of rainfall we have seen this week, we have started getting questions about leaching adjustments and/or drowning recovery recommendations. I think there are several points to consider. Most importantly, growers should proceed with caution. Fertilizer is like salt in your soup, you can always add more, but you can't take it out once it's there.

1) Drowning recovery. The first obvious step is to provide as much help as you can to drain standing water if possible. In addition, research has shown that 10-15 lbs. of N and 10-15 lbs. of K₂O will aid recovery from standing water. K-Mag is probably the desired source of K since it provides K, S, and Mg. The idea is to provide a jump-start to the damaged roots.

2) Leaching Adjustments. This one is much more complicated. There are so many factors to consider that there is no one size fits all recommendation. Growers should consider, soil texture, depth to clay, rainfall amount, rainfall intensity (runoff vs. percolation) and amount of N applied prior to the rain. There is a leaching adjustment table in the Tobacco Production Guide that will help growers consider all these factors and more. However, growers should realize that either the leaching tables tend over estimate losses or we tend to over estimate the amount of percolated rainfall, depth to clay, etc. Use the leaching adjustment tables conservatively.

Generally speaking, the safest approach is to apply N leaching adjustments in 15-20 lbs. of N increments to avoid over application. Then make an additional application(s) later if needed or when more long-term trends for rainfall are better understood.

If using UAN for the leaching adjustment, tobacco at this growth stage will be extremely sensitive to leaf burn, even if the UAN is diluted in water. In addition, there is a better plant response to soil applications of N than to foliar applications or broadcast sprays on larger tobacco. Remember, tobacco will not absorb enough N through the leaves to help. It must go into the soil and up through the roots. I would recommend banding the N beside the plant if applications are made before layby, or using drop lines for larger tobacco.

For dry N sources, damage can occur when broadcast applications result in fertilizer collecting in the bud of the tobacco therefore such application methods should be avoided if possible.

I hope this helps and if you have any questions, let me know.

Feel free to continue contacting our office for research-based information at 336-694-4158 or on my cell phone at 434-728-5980. Hope this information will be of value to you in your decisions for planting this year's crop.

Sincerely,



Joey E. Knight, III
Caswell County Extension Director

Persons with disabilities and persons with limited English proficiency may request accommodations to participate by contacting Joey E. Knight, III County Extension Director at 336-694-4158 (phone) or joey_knight@ncsu.edu (email) or 336-694-5930 (fax), or in person at the Caswell County Extension office at least (5) days prior to the event. Employment and program opportunities are offered to all people regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.