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## CASWELL TOBACCO EXTENSION NOTES

### Summer 2015 Season

Hello again,

I think the tobacco crop has gotten off to a good start in most areas. Several growers are harvesting and the receiving stations are already beginning to open. However, the weather conditions have been extremely variable across the State. We definitely need some rainfall for growers to make the desirable pounds per acre for a good crop year. In this edition of Caswell Tobacco Extension Notes is some information that I want to share with you that may be helpful in making crop decisions.



## **Black Shank Disease Update**

While visiting farms and traveling around the county and the state, the most concern this summer has been Black Shank Disease. Recently, I attended the VA Tech University Tobacco Field Day in Blackstone, Virginia. Some great research on new pesticide selection is coming down the pipeline that may have some good possibilities in helping to control this disease in the future.



Black shank is a warm-weather disease, which is favored by temperatures ranging from about 84 to 90 F. which we definitely have had this 2015 year. Once soil in a field becomes infested with the black shank fungus, it cannot be eliminated; therefore, the disease must be managed every year using crop rotation, variety selection, and a good pesticide program when transplanting, cultivating, and layby on a continuing basis.

The disease is characterized by a rapid yellowing and wilting followed by death of the entire plant. A dark brown to black, somewhat sunken, lesion appear on the stalk at or near the ground level. This lesion often extends up the stalk or shank of the plant causing it to turn black. Stalks when split or cut usually reveals the blackened pith separated into discrete disks. This feature is of diagnostic value only when used in conjunction with other observations because disking may occur due to other factors. Also I can take infected tobacco samples for you to North Carolina State University for laboratory analysis (which only costs \$20 for disease diagnosis). As I observe in fields in the county this summer, infected plants are scattered or uniformly distributed in fields. Roots and crowns are decayed.

Growers should not depend solely on resistant varieties for disease management. Even resistant varieties are sometimes severely damaged by disease, especially where rotation, stalk and root destruction, and other management tools are not used. Some varieties are highly resistant to only certain races or species of a particular pathogen. For example, root-knot-resistant varieties are only resistant against *Meloidogyne incognita*, races 1 and 3. Some of the varieties are highly resistant to race 0 of the black shank fungus but quite susceptible to race 1.

## Insect Control Update

Similar to recent weeks, we are still in a bit of a midsummer lull for pest pressure. However, we still have weeks to go, and a lot can change in that time.



Although I haven't seen aphids at any of my on-farm sites here in the county, we are seeing heavy infestations at the Oxford Tobacco Research Station. Our project there focuses on tobacco production for use in biofuel manufacture and this week we had to make a foliar treatment of Admire Pro to help control these aphids. The active ingredients used on hornworms and budworms are not as effective for aphids, so selecting the proper chemical for treatment is very important.

Feel free to continue contacting me at 336-694-4158 (office) or 434-728-5980 (cell) for research based information and Extension recommendations. Hope this information will be of value to you.

Sincerely,



Joey E. Knight, III  
Caswell County Extension Director

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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](mailto: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.