Control of Wheat Head Scab with Fungicide Applications
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- **Head Blight or Scab of wheat:** *Fusarium* spp. - Head blight, also called pink mold, white heads or tombstone scab, is manifested by the premature death or blighting of spikelets of the head. The disease appears on all small grain crops and is especially important during humid and rainy weather. Prolonged rainy spells during the blooming stage of the wheat will enhance conditions for infection. Significant yield losses result from floret sterility and poor seed filling.

- Grain from scab-blighted fields is less palatable to livestock and many times contains deoxynivalenol (DON). This is a mycotoxin that can induce muscle spasms and vomiting in certain non-ruminant animals (especially swine). The toxin remains stable for years in stored grain. Bread made from scabby wheat has been described as intoxicating. Wheat with high levels of DON may not be saleable. Crop rotation and foliar fungicides are the best means of control. Sometimes under rainy weather conditions not all the disease will be controlled. Head scab may be greatly increased if wheat is following a corn rotation.

- **Caramba** (metconazole) at 13.5 fl. oz/a is recommended for good control of Scab sprayed at the mid-blooming stage of wheat. It also gives very good control of other diseases such as Powdery Mildew, Glume Blotch, Leaf Blotch, Stripe Rust, Leaf Rust and Stem Rust. Caramba is an excellent Triazole fungicide and has been shown in research and demonstration plots to increase yields while significantly reducing the amount of DON compared to Strobilurin fungicides and other triazoles.

Replicated trials in 13 locations during 2009-2012 spread across five states (MD, KS, SD, TN and MI) showed that Caramba at 13.5 fl. oz/a significantly reduced DON levels from 3.21 ppm in the untreated to 1.68 ppm, and increased yields by 11.4 bu/a.

In 2012, research trials in MI, VA and KY showed increases in yield from 107 bu./a for the untreated to 114 bu./a by using sequential applications of **Priaxor** at 3 fl. oz/a at the F7 growth stage (second node visible) followed by Caramba (13.5 fl.oz/a) at F 10.5.1 (mid-flowering) stage.

- Application **timing** and good **coverage** are very important for best control. Rainy weather during the heading and flowering stage is conducive for head scab development. However, this is a critical time for the fungicide application. Wheat producers should prepare in advance and be ready to spray **Caramba** when wheat is at the proper growth stage (F 10.5.1).