



U.S. Wheat and Barley Scab Initiative

FHB Tool Talk

Dear Extension Specialists, Crop Consultants, and Grower Organizations,

Production system elements can influence and complicate our ability to reduce Fusarium head blight (FHB) and mycotoxin contamination. In many regions of the United States, small grains are an important part of crop production but compete for acreage priority with several other critical crops, such as corn. With the increasing incentives for and environmental benefits of no-till production, here are several considerations for farmers growing small grains under these conditions.

Animal-dependent local economies rely heavily on monocot crops such as wheat, triticale, rye, orchardgrass, and corn. Although these crops are often easier to manage than a non-host crop such as alfalfa, they are also more susceptible to FHB. Crop rotation is an important step in the management of FHB. However, if planting wheat or barley following an FHB host crop, select a moderately resistant variety whenever possible.

Many regions also rely heavily on no-till corn production. During a dry fall, soil microbes may not adequately break down crop residue. In addition, wheat seedling emergence may be uneven. These conditions can increase the inoculum load during the spring and widen the flowering window, increasing the opportunity for FHB infection. Therefore, when corn residue is abundant, applying a fungicide at flowering may be the most judicious option, regardless of the overall FHB risk. See the [USWBSI fungicide timing postcards](#) for more information on making timely fungicide applications within the different wheat and barley classes.

Fog and heavy morning dew may increase the risk of FHB even when weather conditions are relatively dry. In addition, dense tillering and the presence of weeds can increase the relative humidity within the crop canopy. Managing weeds can help reduce moisture levels in dense canopies and improve airflow, allowing small grain heads to dry more quickly. However, when plant populations are extremely dense and foggy conditions or persistent morning dew are present, a fungicide may be warranted to help manage FHB.

Thank you for reading!



Wheat increase plots planted into a no-till corn field in Kentucky. Photo credit: Carl Bradley, University of Kentucky.

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