Best Management Practices for Colorado Corn

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Introduction

Corn is an amazing plant – its ability to transform sunlight and water into grain and biomass is astoundingly efficient. Grain yields of over 440 bushels per acre have been documented in the U.S. Corn growers are pretty amazing, too – they use their management and production skills to produce over 150 million bushels of grain and 2.4 million tons of silage each year in Colorado on a little over 1.2 million acres.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are production methods, structures and management practices designed to protect water quality while maintaining economic returns. Voluntary adoption of these practices by corn producers will help prevent contamination of water resources, improve public perception of the industry and perhaps eliminate the need for further regulation and mandatory controls.

Corn growers in Colorado face a variety of production problems. Each year the corn crop is exposed to a unique combination of pests and environmental stresses that can limit yields - drought, heat, cold, hail, insects, weeds, and disease, just to name a few. Growers need to be aware of these potential problems and must be able to recognize and correct or control problems before they cause economic yield losses.

In addition to the expectation of an inexpensive and plentiful crop, society expects growers to protect water quality, wildlife and other resources from any harm due to their production practices. Growers face increased scrutiny in their fertilizer, pesticide, manure and irrigation practices. Regulatory agencies and others are evaluating agriculture's contribution to nonpoint source pollution and how it can best be controlled. Fortunately, research has shown that corn growers can produce their crops in ways that are profitable, while still protecting the environment.

Specialists at Colorado State University developed this guide as a tool for producers to use in diagnosing and solving common production problems. It is not designed to replace expert advice from your crop consultant or to replace more in-depth resource materials, but rather to help you recognize corn problems as they appear in the field during the growing season. Additionally, this guide is intended to heighten your awareness of the water quality benefits that can be obtained by selecting the appropriate combination of best management practices for your farm.

The Colorado Corn Growers Association encourages all crop producers to enhance their stewardship of land and water resources and the Association has provided funding for this guide to be distributed to its membership. To obtain a copy or to provide input, contact the Colorado Corn Growers Association at the address in the box on the left.

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