If you would like to be added to this mailing list, send a request to Molly Werner at werne022@umn.edu. This newsletter and the advice herein are free. You usually get what you pay for.

Crop weather
Rainfall, air and soil temperatures, degree-days, soil moistures, and other current and historical weather data for a little spot about two miles west of Lamberton, MN can be found at the University of Minnesota Southwest Research and Outreach Center (SWROC) website: http://swroc.cfans.umn.edu/WeatherInformation/index.htm.

Planting is pretty well wrapped up in the Lamberton area. Some portions of WC, SW, and SC Minnesota are too wet, some are too dry and some are just right. In the wettest areas, Minnesota farmers have had to spend most of April and May waiting and hoping fields would just dry enough to plant.

Soybeans, where planted, are now emerging rapidly as the weather warms. May 5th planted beans at the SWROC look very good.

I made a trip to Morris MN on the 24th. I needed to soil sample SCN research plots at the West Central Research and Outreach Center and in a Swift County cooperator's field.

Planting progress was highly variable by geography. I did not see much corn emerged north of Olivia. To the south, some tilled and replanted or rotary hoeing efforts in low spots and headlands showed where corn emergence struggled but most corn stands looked good. Some had recently filled in the wet areas they had to go around earlier.
Areas west of Benson and to the north were struggling to get things planted. Another pocket southwest of New Ulm was planting beans and trying to finish corn. I am sure many other areas were hitting planting hard as well - it's getting late.

Floaters, their tenders, tractors with field cultivators and planters in tow, and herbicide applicators were in constant view as I drove through the areas where spring moisture had caused delays.

An older gentleman was wrestling a walk behind tiller to put in a garden at the edge of a recently planted corn field. It looked like he was getting plenty of advice from the two elderly gents beside him and the garden was destined for success. A male northern harrier pounced on a mouse in the road ditch across the highway.

While I tried pulling good soil cores from a particularly sticky area in a Morris field a Sons of the Pioneers song came through the headphones. The lyrics, "I'm up in the morning before daylight and before I sleep the moon shines bright", seemed strangely appropriate.

The U of M Soybean Breeding Project was hard at work planting too. The late spring start had Dr. Jim Orf in the saddle planting IDC plots. They were still hard at it as I finished my work and turned the pickup towards home.

Center pivots sitting in fields with soil too wet to work were a sad sight but in some nearby fields, fieldwork progress had been made.

Further south, a 12-row planter with a bent marker arm was parked next to a freshly worked field. An impatient operator wielding a sledge hammer was trying to persuade the marker into performing as designed. A little way down the highway, I waited to pass a track tractor and thirty something - row planter. An old 8-row planting off in the distance reminded me of many earlier planting seasons and brought a smile. Sure, there might be a difference in how long it takes to finish a field but it's still all farming I suppose.

Agriculturalists have to put in long hours under stressful conditions when weather does not cooperate. If you are trying hard to get in a successful 2014 Minnesota crop, whether it's your crop or if your hired out for someone else's, my hat's off. Be safe out there.

Wasps
The "plague" has been identified as northern paper wasps Polistes fuscatus. Evidently, my wasp tolerance is considerably higher than most of the population.

I did notice numerous worker wasps foraging for nectar to feed themselves and insect prey to feed their young in the backyard crab apple last Saturday evening. Other than a lone honeybee, the bee pollinators were absent but to quote Michael Crichton in Jurassic Park, "Life will find a way".
Small grains
So far, the grain aphid and aster leafhopper mass immigrations that hit the SWROC the last couple years are absent. Both winter and spring grains look good. I did receive one report of bad winter wheat stands started by poor germination in the fall. Watch the growth regulator herbicide timing as spring planted wheat will develop rapidly with the warm weather.

Alfalfa insects
Looks like a good 1st cutting alfalfa coming in the parts of Minnesota that I have traveled.

I have not seen any Potato leafhoppers at the SWROC as of yet. I have not yet been in your fields so I would not assume none have made it to MN yet this spring.

The Alfalfa weevil egg hatch has just started.

Pea aphids are present in low numbers. As a result, seven-spotted and convergent lady beetles are moving into alfalfa. A few lacewing adults are starting to show up now. Currently at the SWROC, the most common beneficial seems to be damsel bugs or Hemiptera:Nabidae.

Black cutworms
There are at least two flights where larvae would be large enough show leaf feeding on small corn and will soon be large enough to cut corn. The highest, but not exclusive, risk for black cutworm infestations is highest from Faribault and Steele County in SC MN northwest up the Minnesota River to southern WC MN.

Pay close attention to any leaf feeding as you scout. Thresholds and ID information can be found in the newsletters here.

This evening, my long-suffering wife and I were having our nightly religion and politics discussion. I noticed a cutworm on our outdoor table and my wife noticed my sudden lack of attention to her comments.

It was a fourth- instar black cutworm. It was larger than expected based on known moth flights and degree days. How it got on the table is a bit of a mystery. A few greenhouse plants for the garden sat there for a short time on Memorial Day. Greenhouse heat could account for the advanced development. On the other hand, the cutworm could have been dropped by a clumsy bird or paper wasp on the way to its nest.

I did manage to get one close-up before I accidentally set my cell phone on top of the cutworm. Look at the tubercles; the small black bumps on each segment near the back of the cutworm. The unequal size is a characteristic of black cutworms. The overall
appearance of black cutworm larvae is black and “greasy”. Under a good hand lens, the skin of the black cutworm has a granular appearance.

Scout early, scout often and happy trails,

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