

Reports of Diplodia ear rot in corn have been coming in, with the amount of damage reported ranging from none to 30%. There have been reported differences in planting dates and hybrids.

Diplodia is easy to recognize when present. There is grayish or grayish-brown mold on and between the kernels, and usually only part of the ear is affected. Another characteristic feature of Diplodia ear rot is pycnidia. The pycnidia appear as black spots that may be scattered on the husks, cobs, and sides of kernels. Diplodia will typically start at the base of the ear and progress toward the tip.

There are several consequences of Diplodia ear rot:

1. Lower grain quality resulting in discounts at the first point of sale.
2. Affected ears typically weigh less than uninfected ears.
3. More cobs and kernels are ground up during harvest, resulting in higher levels of broken corn and foreign matter.
4. Kernels break easier, resulting in more fines in the storage bin.

There are several options to manage ear rot if it is present:

1. If you know Diplodia ear rot is present, harvest those fields first.
2. Adjust the combine to blow as much of the lightweight, shriveled, and shrunken kernels out.
3. Pre-cleaning, especially after drying, will remove the lighter, damaged kernels, cob pieces, fines and foreign material.
4. Lower the moisture content to 15% moisture as quickly as possible to stop further growth of the fungus.
5. If Diplodia ear rot is significant, dry grain to below 14% moisture and cool to below 50 degrees F as quickly after harvest to prevent infection of the damaged grain by other molds.
6. Infected grain should be stored at 30 degrees F.
7. Limit storing Diplodia-infected grain to the cold weather season.
8. No Diplodia-infected corn should be held into the following summer.