

Bacterial Leaf Streak

By Andy Luke, field specialist in agronomy with MU Extension

Bacterial leaf streak has been found in corn fields in neighboring states and is likely in Northwest Missouri as well. This disease can infect field corn, popcorn and sweet corn, and spreads through via wind or rain.

Bacterial leaf streak is a disease that was confirmed in the United States for the first time in Nebraska in 2016. Since then, it has been found in several bordering states and was confirmed in Missouri for the first time in 2019. It can look very similar to some fungal diseases, such as gray leaf spot, which can lead to confusion and misdiagnoses. Symptoms of bacterial leaf streak will include lesions or streaks between the leaf veins. The streaks can be brown, orange or yellow, and will appear yellow when held up to the sun. The edges of the lesions will appear slightly wavy, which can help differentiate it from the smooth edges of gray leaf spot.

Because bacterial leaf streak comes from a bacterial and not a fungal pathogen, foliar fungicides will not control this disease. One of the first signs that growers notice that makes them suspect that they have bacterial leaf streak is foliar fungicides not controlling their gray leaf spot. This is of course caused by a misdiagnosis. The disease survives on infected corn residue from previous years, and wet conditions are favorable for its development. It can show up at any time throughout the corn's life cycle, even as early as V4. The yield impact from bacterial leaf streak is not known, but it's not expected to cause extensive yield loss unless heavy symptoms are present during grain fill. Like other bacterial diseases, there are no chemicals labeled to control bacterial leaf streak. In some operations, the use of crop rotation or tillage can help reduce the number of surviving bacteria, but neither practice will completely eliminate the risk of disease. If you suspect that bacterial leaf streak is present in your fields, please contact your local University of Missouri Extension office.

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