

Field Notes
August 3, 2005
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Things are finally starting to slow down as fields are drained in preparation for harvest. Last week we were able to get one verification field harvested in the mud which cancelled plans for second cropping the field. The yield was 42.5 barrels or 153 bushels per acre green. Moisture was around 16.4% for a dry weight of 40 bbls or 144 bu dry.

We also decided to drain our hybrid field early because of shattering of the mature panicles. Yesterday (Tuesday) we took hand samples to estimate moisture as a means of checking the progress of ripening. Hand samples revealed moisture levels of 22.3 and 26.1%. Because we took these samples around 10:30 a.m. the numbers are a little high. In comparison to a sample taken with a combine we would expect the moisture to be about 3 to 4% higher in the combine sample than the hand sample. If the weather holds this field will probably be ready to harvest next week justifying our decision to drain early.

Hand samples usually run between 2 and 4% higher than combine samples, but are easy to obtain. All you need is a 5 gallon bucket and something to help you cut stalks. Moisture readings can be made in the field with a portable moisture meter or taken to a drier or mill where a moisture meter is available. The sample should be stored in a paper bag, **not** a plastic bag and the measurement made as soon after obtaining the sample as possible. The photographs below show Shane Theunissen taking a hand sample a couple of years ago.



Last week we also encountered a couple of diseases one expected and the other a surprise. In our verification field in E. Carroll we literally walked into an area heavily infested with false smut. Conditions were perfect for spore release and there were so many that they colored our pants orange. Dr. Chuck Rush, rice plant pathologist, once told me that in the Philippines the appearance of false smut was an indicator of high yield potential. I sure hope that is right this time. The field had been sprayed with fungicide, but the label only mentions suppression of false smut.

From another field in E. Carroll county agent Donna Lee brought plants to us that I thought were examples of sheath blight on the panicle. After showing them to Dr. Don Groth he said it was not sheath blight, that he suspected sheath rot, but it did not quite fit that either. As of this writing we have not gotten a definitive answer to the problem.

The photograph below left is of false smut mentioned above and below right of the suspected sheath rot. Both were collected in E. Carroll parish last week.



Last week I mentioned the use of sodium chlorate in a letter to the rice agents. This week we added another wrinkle to the decision making process by using our hand sampling technique to estimate how close we are to harvest. Moisture at 1:30 p.m. averaged 20% so we recommended applying the desiccant Thursday or Friday of this week. I also found out Aim is registered as a harvest aid too. I would think it would be most appropriate when sesbania is a problem at harvest or possibly other broadleaf weeds on which Aim is effective.