

Field work: scouting for pests

How can careful crop inspection increase yield?

Field corn should be scouted weekly from emergence through black layer (maturity). During the first few weeks, fields should be scouted similarly to other crops where a random walking pattern (zig zag) is used to ensure adequate coverage of the field.

Materials

- Small hand lens (optional)
- Pocket knife
- Shovel

Examine the problem area

1. Is the problem scattered randomly through the field or occurring in a pattern?
2. Is the problem more prevalent at a field entrance or along a fence, field edge, or waterway?
3. Is the damage more severe in low areas or on exposed slopes?
4. Does the pattern correspond to planting, spraying, or other field activities?

Check individual plants for symptoms and signs

5. Compare damaged plants with healthy plants.
6. Check the entire plant, including:
 - leaves
 - stems
 - roots
 - internal tissues for feeding injury or disease symptoms.

Reflection

What negative patterns did you observe in your corn field? Is the problem pest, spray, or weather related?
What is the best course of action to improve your yield?