

Ag Notes

Harford County Newsletter

UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND
EXTENSION

University of
Maryland Extension

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M—F 8:00 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

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Hello, Harford County!

For a while there I wasn't so sure summer would ever show up, but the heat index is currently 109°F as I write this article. May and the first part of June remained unseasonably cool, but that seems to have switched. Moderate drought conditions still persist in central Maryland, with the worst conditions existing in Harford and Baltimore counties. It seems like we had a lot of rain in June, but in actuality it did not add up to much. We are still running over 2 inches shy for rainfall for June and year-to-date. However, we all know that can change in an instant with a single summer thunderstorm.

July also marks the beginning of fair season for many of our 4-H and FFA families and I look forward to seeing many of you at the Harford County Farm Fair in the next few weeks.

Speaking of 4-H, our long-time 4-H Administrative Assistant, Lynne DiBastiani, will be retiring from our office July 31. Lynne has been a fixture in the office and the 4-H program for 30 years! Being a 4-H'er herself, a 4-H parent, and a 4-H staff member, Lynne has dedicated her life to the 4-H program.



July 2025

The Extension office will be closed July 4 in observance of Independence Day



As of July 31, we will also be saying farewell to Patricia Hoopes, our Nutrient Management Advisor. Tricia has also been devoted and dedicated to Extension for many years, starting in November of 2002. Tricia has been one of our most productive plan writers in the state, writing nutrient management plans that cover over 10,000 acres in the county annually.

As a colleague of both Tricia and Lynne for the past nine years, I can say that they are two of the most dedicated and hard working employees I have had the pleasure of working with and we will certainly miss both of them as they transition into retirement.

In the coming weeks we will be working on rehiring these positions once we are granted approval from College Park (if all goes as planned). The positions will be posted on UMD's job website.

I hope you have an enjoyable 4th of July and a safe and bountiful small grain harvest!

Until next time,
-Andy



FARMERS: It's time to Apply for our Cover Crop Grants



Sign-Up Runs June 23 through July 17, 2025 Maryland's 2025-2026 Cover Crop Program

The Maryland Department of Agriculture has announced this year's Cover Crop Sign-Up will run from **June 23 through July 17, 2025** at local soil conservation districts. This popular conservation program provides farmers with financial assistance to offset costs to plant fall cover crops, building healthy soils and protecting the Chesapeake Bay. The program's budget for this year is \$22 million.

"Planting cover crops is one of the best ways for farmers to protect our precious soil and water resources," said Maryland Agriculture Secretary Kevin Atticks. "Last year's sign-up was one of the largest in our program's history. Maryland farmers planted nearly 500,000 acres of fall cover crops using over \$30 million in department cost-share grants. This year's program has been streamlined to more fully align with state budget projections and make funding go further. Our goal is to support as many farmers as possible in their conservation work."

The department's Cover Crop Program provides Maryland farmers with grants to plant a range of cold-hardy cereal grains and mixes. Farmers may plant cover crops after corn, soybeans, sorghum, tobacco, vegetables, hemp, millet and—new this year—sunflowers and sod. Cover crop fields enrolled in this program may not be harvested but may be grazed or chopped for on-farm livestock forage after becoming well-established.

2025-2026 Program highlights include:

- The base payment is \$35/acre.
- Farmers can earn up to \$65/acre with add-on incentives.

- Farmers who aerially seed cover crops into standing corn by October 10 qualify for a \$10/acre incentive.
- Non-poultry manure may be applied to cover crop fields in the fall for a flat rate of \$25/acre.
- To participate in this program, farmers must sign up to plant at least 10 acres of cover crops.

Fall-planted cover crops benefit the Chesapeake Bay and Maryland's farmland by recycling unused plant nutrients from the preceding summer crop while fortifying the soil for spring planting. Once established, cover crops work all winter to combat erosion, supply the soil with organic matter, reduce weeds and pests, and protect fields from drought and extreme rainfall. As an added bonus, cover crops capture carbon from the air and store it in the soil.

The Cover Crop Program is administered by the department's Conservation Grants Program and the state's 23 soil conservation districts. It is open to Maryland farmers in good standing with the program and in compliance with Maryland's nutrient management requirements. A completed [Current Nutrient Management Plan Certification](#) is required at sign-up. Other restrictions and conditions apply. Funding for the 2025-2026 Cover Crop Program is provided by the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund and the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund.

Farmers should visit their local [soil conservation district](#) between **June 23 and July 17** to apply in person for the cover crop grants. Those who participated in last year's program should check their mailboxes for an information packet. Additional information is also available on the department's [website](#).

Scouting for Tar Spot

Andrew Kness, Senior Agriculture Agent
University of Maryland Extension, Harford County

Cooler than normal temperatures and intermittent rain and fog throughout the month of May has made for favorable conditions for tar spot development. The fungus that causes tar spot on corn (*Phyllachora maydis*) prefers somewhat cooler temperatures and intermittent leaf wetness; conditions which we had for the better part of a month. I have one unconfirmed report of tar spot from June 25, so it would not surprise me if it is lingering in other fields too. If it is, this would be by far the earliest detection of this disease in Maryland. Early infections can be *potentially* concerning if *weather conditions remain cool*. However, heat will break the infection cycle.

With that being said, you will notice how rapidly tar spot disease probability has dropped off in the last few days and into the coming days (Figure 1). This drastic drop is driven by the return of hot temperatures. This heat wave should arrest tar spot development, and if these temperatures continue, will keep this disease at bay until cooler temperatures return.

It would be a wise idea to scout your fields for tar spot as they approach tassel (VT)—I would recommend starting around V10 and monitoring through VT. Tar spot symptoms are characterized by small, round, slightly raised black lesions on the surface of leaves (Figure 2). If you notice tar spot established in your corn during this timeframe, you will want to consider a fungicide application around VT-R2 to manage the

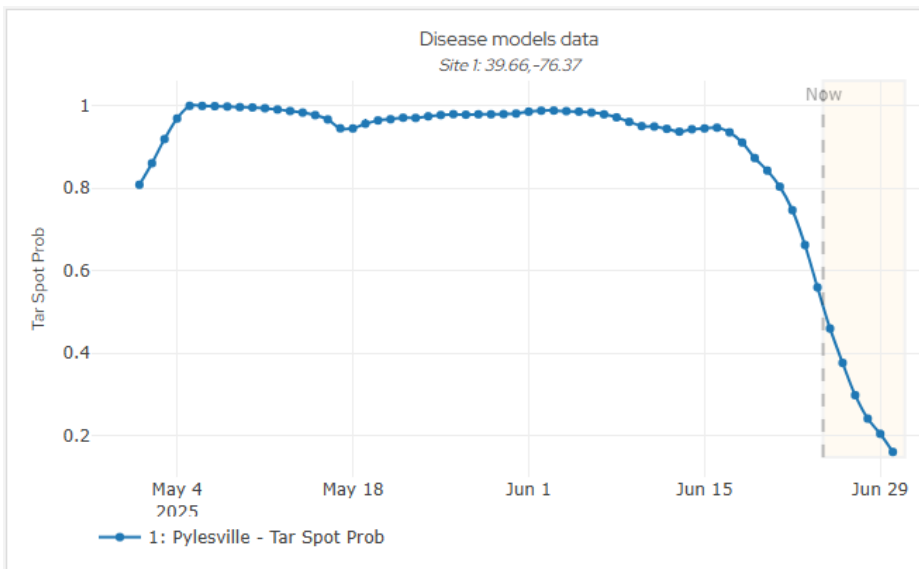


Figure 1. Tar spot disease probability. Graph generated from the [Crop Risk Tool](#).

disease (and others). Do not forget about other diseases, such as gray leaf spot. Conditions for gray leaf spot are *very high* right now and will stay high since the pathogen that causes this disease favors hotter temperatures.

If you find tar spot while scouting, or suspect you have found it, please send me a note or call

me (410-638-3255) as we continue to monitor the spread of this disease in Maryland.

Ag Integrated Pest Management Webinar Series



July 17 - Corn Tar Spot update

Virtual, Noon – 1 pm.
Pesticide Credits are available.

For more details and registration, visit
<https://go.umd.edu/ipmwebinar>

If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this event, please contact Hayden at 301-226-7502.

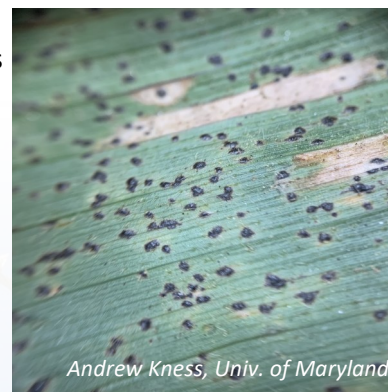


Figure 2. Tar spot on corn leaf.

Andrew Kness, Univ. of Maryland

Minimizing FHB Price Discounts at Harvest

US Wheat and Barley Scab Initiative

It's harvest time and Fusarium head blight (FHB) can reduce wheat and barley grain yield and quality, leading to price discounts due to Fusarium-damaged kernels (FDK), deoxynivalenol (DON), and reduced test weight. If your fields are affected by FHB, adjusting your combine settings can help improve grain quality and reduce losses. Additional strategies such as increasing the fan speed, keeping scabby grain separate, testing for DON, and cleaning of grain can also make a difference. Here are a few strategies to consider for minimizing price discounts at harvest.

Based on [a study](#) in the journal, *Plant Disease*, modifying combine settings to increase fan speed and shutter opening could improve grain quality and reduce price discounts enough to counteract the reduction in harvested grain compared to the standard combine setting.

Researchers tested four combine configurations:

Combine Configuration	Fan Speed / Shutter Opening	Plots with varying levels of FHB index were harvested with each combine setting. Compared to the standard setting (C1), settings C2, C3, and C4 led to lower estimated price discounts by \$10 to \$40 per
C1 (Standard)	1,375 rpm / 70 mm	
C2	1,475 rpm / 70 mm	
C3	1,475 rpm / 90 mm	
C4	1,375 rpm / 90 mm	

ton (see table below). C3 and C4 gave the biggest reductions in price losses by improving grain quality.

Table1. Grain quality and price discounts for plots with varying levels of FHB index harvested with four different combine configurations.

FHB IND (%)	Configuration	Grain quality				Discounts (\$/t)
		Yield (t/ha)	TW (Kg/m ³)	FDK (%)	DON (ppm)	
5	C1	2.95	630.69	6.93	1.25	40.55
	C2	2.90	655.00	4.88	1.20	30.32
	C3	2.41	680.61	3.14	0.77	20.87
	C4	2.71	675.19	3.06	0.79	22.45
20	C1	2.83	617.54	10.46	3.57	61.42
	C2	2.78	641.85	7.94	3.47	51.18
	C3	2.29	667.46	5.70	2.59	33.08
	C4	2.59	662.04	5.60	2.62	34.66
35	C1	2.70	604.39	14.62	8.25	109.79
	C2	2.65	628.70	11.67	8.06	97.64
	C3	2.16	654.31	8.96	6.27	69.69

The estimated gross income was higher with combine settings C2 and C4, with C4 having the most consistency performing well across different levels of FHB index (5 to 35%) and grain prices (\$118 to \$276/t).

Key Takeaway Messages:

Increasing airflow to remove scabby kernels is a profitable strategy.

In this study, increasing airflow through the combine by increasing fan speed (from 1375 to 1475 rpm) or by increasing shutter opening (from 70 to 90 mm) optimized profitability, as the reduction in discounts

due to scabby kernels was enough to offset the loss in revenue due to reduced yield.

However, be careful not to increase airflow by too much.

In this study, increasing both fan speed and shutter opening did not optimize profit, as the marginal improvements in grain quality were not enough to overcome the increased yield loss.

Although plot combine configurations are not directly applicable to field-scale equipment, know that you can fine-tune your combine airflow settings to improve profitability when harvesting FHB-damaged grain.

Kofi Britwum, Assistant Professor of Farm Management
University of Delaware

Tariffs have dominated news headlines in recent months. Some are already in place for goods entering the United States from countries such as China, while others will soon take effect. This latest wave has unsurprisingly sparked considerable political and public debate, partly because they are being used as leverage to advance non-trade objectives in some instances, and partly due to their targeting key allies and neighbors. Even though the current administration may appear to favor tariffs as a preferred tool for addressing economic imbalances and safeguarding national interests, their use in the US is hardly unprecedented. Tariffs are taxes levied on imported goods and can be likened to a tollbooth where foreign goods are subjected to a specific charge. In theory, they are imposed to generate revenue, to protect domestic industries, and as witnessed lately, as a tool to achieve political, national, or social objectives.

The history of tariffs in the United States dates as far back as 1789, when the first tariff law subjected most imported goods to a 5% tax. This was intended to fund the government and to help offset national debts following nearly a decade of the revolutionary war that burdened the young nation. The law established an *ad valorem* tariff, which is a tax based on a percentage of the value of imported goods. Tariffs generally fall into two main categories: *ad valorem* tariff is percentage-based, while a *specific tariff* is a fixed dollar amount per unit of imported goods. The 1789 tariffs, for example, also included a specific tax on targeted goods such as a 10 cent tax on a gallon of wine. Over the course of the 19th century, there were several instances of tariffs which were generally intended to protect key industries such as sugar, steel, iron, and wool.

Tariffs remained a key policy tool in the 20th century as well; the Smoot-Hawley tariff was a notable one signed into law by President Hoover to protect agriculture and US manufacturing business from foreign competition. These tariffs, which were anywhere between 40% to 60% on many imported goods, incited a retaliatory response from over two dozen nations that erected trade barriers on American goods. This contributed to a sharp decline in global trade and coincided with the Great Depression. While economists do not widely believe the Smoot-Hawley tariffs *per se* triggered the Great Depression, it certainly did not help given the prevailing economic conditions. Other administrations such as President Johnson's imposed limited tariffs on trade partners in the mid-1960s. However, after nearly two centuries of tariffs, the 1980's marked a shift in favor of free trade in the US. In recent years though, growing trade deficits, a diminished industrial base, and a decline in wages have reignited de-

bates about the merits of free trade.

With tariffs being back on the table, proponents believe it has its benefits, even if they also come at a cost. Whether the benefits outweigh the costs at any given time is one for debate. In theory, the obvious winners are the industries that are shielded from foreign competition. However, this should be viewed from a more nuanced angle, that is, insofar as other countries do not retaliate with counter-tariffs, and whether supply chains are not disrupted. Consumers tend to bear the brunt via higher prices of the imported products affected, i.e., if businesses decide to pass the costs downstream. Industries in the middle supply chain that use imported materials may also face higher production costs. Where retaliatory tariffs are imposed, US exporters in the affected industries are impacted too.

This latest round imposes a 30% tax on all Chinese goods entering the US, from a high of 145% a few months ago when trade tensions reached a boiling point. Trade negotiations between the world's largest economic giants are ongoing. There have also been proposed and effective tariffs on imported Canadian goods. Additionally, a recently announced 50% tariffs on imported steel and aluminum will soon take effect. While it remains to be seen how this new round of tariffs reverberates across the economy, previous tariffs in 2018 on China may offer insights into potential ramifications.

Then as now, China retaliated with counter-tariffs, which stymied the US soybean export market and expanded China's soybean trade with Latin American countries. This generated considerable uncertainty for American farmers and rippled through other agricultural industries as well, impacting revenues for farm machinery industries due to reduced demand. Additionally, although the proposed tariffs on steel and aluminum may not immediately affect farmers, they could lead to higher costs for equipment over time. Beyond agriculture, this will likely impact other sectors reliant on steel and aluminum as inputs such as automotive, construction, and manufacturing industries. The extent of these effects will depend on whether these trade barriers trigger increased domestic investments and production, or simply drive prices higher across key sectors. However this unfolds, the hope is that its impacts are not drastic. Yet, given how interconnected global trade is, it remains to be seen how it unravels.

[CBC America](#) press release



Figure 1. Grape Root Borer adult.
Image: Johnny N. Dell, Bugwood.org.

CBC America announced today that Section 18 emergency exemptions for ISOMATE GRB Z mating disruption pheromone have been granted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for use on raisin, table, juice and wine grapes for control of Grape Root Borer. The Section 18 approvals are only for the states of Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia.

Grape Root Borer is a major, yet unnoticed lepidopterous wasp-like pest found in nearly all vineyards in the Mid-Atlantic, Midwest and Southeastern states, attacking grape roots, leading to reduced vine productivity, causing slow vine decline, and eventual vine death. Research has confirmed that a single Grape Root Borer larva can girdle 6% of a mature Concord grapevine, resulting in an estimated 47% reduction in total yield per vine. Grape Root Borer is present in an estimated 94% of all Virginia vineyards, with 76% of

vineyards exceeding the damage threshold of 30-larvae per Acre. Today, there are no truly effective solutions for this pest other than ISOMATE GRB Z mating disruption pheromone.

ISOMATE GRB Z is applied as a twist-tie dispenser at a rate of 100-dispensers per Acre at the first detected flight of male Grape Root Borer moths and will disrupt GRB matting season-long. ISOMATE GRB Z is exempt from tolerance with zero-day re-entry and can be used in conventional and organic vineyards.

To learn more about ISOMATE GRB Z, visit www.cbc-agro.com for more information on protecting your vineyards or contact your local ISOMATE distributor or retailer. You can also reach the sales department: loakes@cbcamerica.com.

Farewell from Tricia Hoopes

Dear farmers and friends,

To all things, there is a season, and it is time for me to spend a little time traveling to see my children, my grandchildren, and to help a bit more with the care of my mother.

My retirement date is July 31, 2025. I started working with this program November 2, 2002 (23 years).

I am grateful for this experience with the Nutrient Management Program and with so many creative and industrious clients. It was my pleasure, and I thank all of you who have passed through this office. Surely, I will miss writing plans, but mostly I will miss the people.

The Nutrient Management Office is currently working diligently to go through the process of requesting a new planner. In the meantime please continue to request plans. The program has a process where Nutrient Management Advisors from other counties may step in and do plans for any county. Our Administrative Assistant, Caroline, will be glad to help you.

I wish success to all, and I hope to see you in the community.

Sincerely,

Tricia Hoopes



Herbicide Efficacy and Recent Weather

Mark VanGessel, Weed Management Extension Specialist
University of Delaware

The cooler than normal temperatures the a few weeks ago has resulted in slow crop growth. Many crops treated with herbicides during this cooler weather have shown “crop response,” the softer term for crop injury. The biological processes that allow plants to metabolize (or “deactivate”) herbicides depend on actively growing plants. When plant growth slows, metabolism also slows, increasing the risk of visible crop injury. As temperatures rise and crops resume normal growth, these herbicide injury symptoms typically become less noticeable, and they rarely impact yield.

Additionally, many herbicides require intense sunlight to achieve maximum effectiveness. However, the extended period of cloudy or hazy skies in recent weeks may have reduced herbicide performance. Fields treated during the cool snap should be scouted to assess herbicide effectiveness and determine whether retreatment is necessary.



JULY 24TH | ALL DAY

CHECK-OFF FUNDED GRANTS
NETWORKING | RECOGNITION
CRAB FEAST & BBQ



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CENTREVILLE, MD 21617**

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Andrew Kness

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If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate in any event or activity, please contact the University of Maryland Extension office at least two weeks prior to the event.

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Dates to remember

19-26 Jul. Harford County Farm Fair.

17 Jul. Tar Spot Update. 12 noon. Free. Online via Zoom.
Register at go.umd.edu/ipmwebinar.

19 Jul. Fundamentals of Sheep Production. 10 AM-3 PM.
Charles Soil Conservation District, Waldorf, MD. Free.
Register [online](#) or call Brittany Fletcher at (301) 226-7576.



July 2025