

Winter Grain Mite in SW Oklahoma

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Hosts: Wheat, etc.

Winter Grain Mites: They are being found in wheat fields in SW Oklahoma. They are often associated with dry weather such as were now experiencing. If you see an area of the field with a pale green appearance you will want to look close to determine if WGM are present. Note they can be at the base of the plant or even in the cracks of the soil during the colder days (figure 1 and 2).

Symptoms: Mites are not true insects, but are closely related to ticks and spiders. Dark brown, with orange-red legs and an orange or red spot on the upper abdomen. There are two generations of winter grain mite each year. The first begins in the fall, as over summering eggs hatch. The second generation begins sometime in January when the adults lay eggs (figure 3), and reaches peak numbers in March. These mites feed on the leaf sheaths and shoots near the ground. They move up the plant at night and on cloudy days. Leaves take on a silvery gray color when injured and leaf tips may turn brown.

Hosts: Small grains, including wheat, barley, and oats, are susceptible to winter grain mite. Other hosts include grasses, especially bluegrass, bentgrass, ryegrass, and fescue. The mite also infests and damages legumes, vegetables, ornamental flowers, cotton, peanuts, and various weeds.

Control: Please contact your local county extension office for current control information.



Figure 1- Winter Grain Mites on Small Grain leaf. Note the

Damaged lighter green areas of the leaf.



Figure 2 – Immature Winter Grain Mites on Wheat

(Note their small size compared to the leaf).



Figure 3 - Adult Winter Grain Mite on Wheat Leaf