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Now is the Time to Apply Alfalfa Snout Beetle-Busting Nematodes

For farmers who grow alfalfa to feed their dairy cows and other livestock and to sell as a cash crop, now is the time to apply the native nematodes that Northern New York Agricultural Development Program (NNYADP)–funded research has shown to help control the highly-destructive alfalfa snout beetle (ASB).

Some farmers in the region have followed the inexpensive farmer-friendly nematode-rearing protocol developed by Cornell University entomologist Elson Shields and his Shields lab research team. The treatment employs two types of Northern New York-native nematodes that work in the shallower and deeper soil levels. The step-by-step manual is online at www.nnyagdev.org.

The Cornell researchers believe that an initial treatment to establish a population of the nematodes should lead to long-term control of ASB. Many growers who are rearing and applying the nematodes are treating multiple and entire fields for widespread response.

The cost of the nematode application per acre is approximately 25 percent of the cost of losing of losing an alfalfa stand to ASB.

A new economic study requested by Shields and conducted by agronomist Everett Thomas estimates ASB crop damage can result in the loss of as much as \$175 to \$230 per acre for the destruction of a second-year stand of the valuable feed and cash crop.

More than 500,000 acres of New York agricultural land is known to be infested with insect pest that can destroy entire fields in one year. Two decades of research, funded by the NNYADP, has developed the nematode biocontrol solution and is continuing to advance the breeding of ASB-resistant alfalfa varieties. Donald R. Viands and Julie L. Hanson at Cornell lead the plant breeding research work in cooperation with Shields' lab personnel.

ASB is known to exist in Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence Counties in Northern New York; in Oswego, Cayuga and Wayne Counties along Lake Ontario; and in southeastern Ontario, Canada.

The New York Farm Viability Institute and Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station have also provided funding in support of development of ASB control. Learn more online at www.nnyagdev.org.

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