Forage Research Update

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WISCONSIN - Aphanomyces Root Rot of Alfalfa

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Aphanomyces root rot is most severe in flooded soils. It is often associated with Phytophthora root rot, resulting in poor seedling establishment or reduced yield and persistence. Aphanomyces root rot may cause seedling death, but more often results in stunted, yellow plants due to root decay and reduced numbers of N-fixing nodules. In established stands, infected plants produce less forage and/or are slow to recover from winter dormancy in the spring.

Lateral root decay common to Aphanomyces.

Alfalfa varieties resistant to Race 1 of Aphanomyces are commonly available. However, the Race 2 form of the pathogen is being detected more frequently. Many university plant disease diagnostic labs can test soils for both races of Aphanomyces.

Alfalfa breeding programs have developed varieties resistant to Race 2 of Aphanomyces, but they are limited in number. Fortunately, varieties resistant to Race 2 are highly resistant to Race 1. More Race 2-resistant varieties will be available soon.