



Corn Smut

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Pest Background

- Corn smut is caused by the fungal pathogen *Ustilago maydis*.
- Spores are spread through wind or water splashing to nearby plants.
- This pathogen infects the corn through the silks prior to pollination, or by wounds on the plant (Fig 3).

Identification

- Corn smut is easily identified by rapid swelling, known as galling, on ears, stalks, leaves, and tassels (Fig 1).
- Galls become papery and produce black teliospores (Fig 2).



*Fig 1: Galls caused by *Ustilago maydis* on corn ears. Photo by M. Henrickson*



Fig 2: Masses of teliospores resemble black soot. Photo by M. Henrickson



Fig 3: Corn smut growth at base of a previously damaged stalk.
Photo by M. Henrickson

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Management

- Resistant varieties are available, consult local seed representatives to discuss hybrid options.
- Early planting dates can minimize the window silks are susceptible to spores.
- Crop rotation can disfavor the pathogen by removing a susceptible host from the affected region.

References

Crop Protection Network . (2022, January 27).Common Smut of Corn.Retrieved from Crop Protection Network:
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