

News column – week of May 11, 2026
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Why is my wheat turning yellow and stunted?

This is the million dollar question! Unfortunately, there is more than just one thing going on with the 2026 wheat crop! Imagine that! The wheat crop is about 2-3 weeks ahead of schedule and short across northcentral Kansas and has been battling drought stress for the last 3-5 months. Some parts of NC Kansas were able to receive some needed moisture, but at this point, most of the wheat yields have already been determined. Some fields have already been released by insurance.

Another problem that has occurred this spring, is at least two low temperature events and you can definitely see the results of that with things such partially white/bleached heads, “trapped” heads in the boot or heads with no grain.

So the third problem is the disease, Wheat Streak Mosaic! As you know the **Wheat Streak mosaic virus** has been an epidemic the last couple of years, especially, if volunteer wheat was not managed and controlled. The **wheat curl mite** is the insect that spreads the virus with volunteer wheat as the primary host. Our K-State Extension plant pathology lab is receiving many wheat samples with over 75% of the samples testing positive for one of the three Wheat Mosaic Viruses including Wheat Streak, High Plains and Triticum. The primary defense against these viruses still remains to manage and control your volunteer wheat in the NEW “30 day window” protocol. So, for NC Kansas the recommended “window” would be **August 15 to September 15!** The “old” K-State Extension standard recommendation was controlling the volunteer wheat at least 2 weeks prior to drilling your wheat or when it emerges.

So, I guess you could say, “Three strikes and you are out!” I have received several calls, in the last 10 days to two weeks, on the wheat condition around northcentral Kansas, with the question, “what is the cause of the widespread “yellowing” of the wheat?” So the answer is “all the above” with drought, freeze and diseases. So, producers are making some difficult decisions on their wheat fields.

On Thursday, **May 21**, we will hosting a tour of each of our wheat plot locations in Jewell, Mitchell, and Smith counties with approximately 25 different wheat varieties in each of the

demonstration plots. This would be an excellent opportunity to learn about these different factors and what you can do next year as far as wheat variety selection along with cultural practices. For specific times and locations, visit our website at postrock.ksu.edu. Our 2026 K-State Extension, Post Rock District wheat plot cooperators include Jason Ryan and Justin Angleton, Jewell County; Mike and Gregory Jordan, Mitchell County; along with Art and Linda Befort for Smith County. We certainly would like to thank these cooperators and recognize them, for their continued commitment to our K-State Extension, Post Rock District, wheat demonstration plot program! Hope to see you at one of the stops! Bring your family, friends and neighbors.

If you have more questions on your wheat and would like me to come and take a look at your field or would like to volunteer for a wheat demonstration plot, stop by or give me a call at any of our Post Rock Extension District Offices in Beloit, Lincoln, Mankato, Osborne, or Smith Center.