

Critical Questions to Help You Manage Persistent Pest Problems

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Do you constantly struggle to manage pests in your high tunnel and wonder why? Are you unsure what natural enemy to use or what information you should give to a biocontrol supplier or Extension agent? Below is a list of critical questions you should think about to help you successfully manage your persistent pest issues.

1. Do I scout for pests and beneficials?

- a. What crops are infested?
- b. How much of my crop is infested in each tunnel?
- c. What pests are infesting my crop?
- d. How many pests are there per plant?
- e. How long has this been an issue?
- f. Are there any signs of parasites or predators in the crop?
- g. Do my employees know how to identify pests?
- h. Do I mark the areas that are infested to monitor over time?

2. Do my production strategies favor pests?

- a. Do I gradually till crops under even though there are pests on them?
- b. Do I remove all plant material (including weeds) before planting new crops?
- c. Do I fallow tunnels for a period of time?
- d. Do I start my own seeds or buy in transplants that may be infested with pests?
- e. Do I check incoming plants for pests before I plant them?

3. Should I use natural enemies or spray chemical pesticides?

- a. Are pest levels too high for biocontrol to handle or does it need knockdown with a pesticide?
- b. Am I using the right products for the pests present?
- c. Are they being used during the right life stage of the pest's life cycle?
- d. If I use natural enemies, am I using them at the right time of year?
- e. Am I using the right rates for the level of pests per plant and amount of plants infested?
- f. Will I consistently follow-up on the management action to determine if worked (scout)?

4. Will I keep records?

- a. What pest problems did I have at this time in past years?
- b. What were the pest levels on what crops?
- c. What did I do to manage the pests last time?
- d. Did my management strategy work?

5. Can I plan ahead?

- a. Did I keep records of what I did last season?
- b. How did the past season management strategies work?
- c. If management last season didn't work, why? (Were pest numbers too high and I used biocontrol; Did I treat at the wrong life stage; Did I not apply the proper rate)?

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