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# Technical Bulletin

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## **Top dieback in corn: Is this anthracnose or not?**

*Mitch Barlow, Technical Team Agronomist, CCA – LG Seeds*

The dark green fields that were throughout SW Iowa and NW Missouri this summer are very quickly turning brown indicating the end to another growing season. While this color change is not unusual. What is of concern is just how quickly it is occurring.

So, to look for Anthracnose stalk rot (ASR) we need to take a step back into the growing season. First, we need to check the distribution in the field. It is rare for a disease to infect an entire field. Symptoms of top dieback occur on random plants. Secondly, we need to peel back the leaf sheath at the top of the affected area and look for black anthracnose lesions. If you see a pink jellylike substance on the stalk. it is likely to be anthracnose. If you split the stalk the pith will appear rotted or discolored in the upper internodes.



Picture courtesy of Jesse Grogan, AgReliant Genetics, LLC

A fungicide application at flowering could indirectly reduce anthracnose by reducing foliar disease severity and thus late-season plant disease. The other way of controlling anthracnose is to plant a hybrid with ASR tolerance. LG Seeds sells several of them in all maturity groups. Talk to your local SAM or TTA to recommend the best hybrid to combat this for your area.

Most of the browning across my area, however, is most likely due to premature senescence of plant leaf tissue due to several environmental stresses during summer. For example, extreme drought in Southern Iowa and Northern Missouri. There were several days with temperatures around 100 degrees with heat indexes hovering around 110. With the heat and drought stress many of these corn fields called it quits for the 2018 growing season.

### **Sources & Additional Information:**

<https://crops.extension.iastate.edu/cropnews/2015/09/why-all-corn-dying-anthracnose-blame>

<https://www.agry.purdue.edu/ext/corn/news/timeless/topleafdeath.html>

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