



**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION**

Colorado State University Extension Golden Plains Area Extension

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Agronomy Agent's Corner #18

Todd Ballard

Topdressing Nitrogen in Wheat during a Drought Year

Topdressing nitrogen on wheat allows for improved nitrogen use efficiency over a single nitrogen application at the beginning of the season. Last year's drought left wheat with a slow start and the question of whether germination occurred in time for vernalization to occur. Some reason for optimism was brought by rainfall on March 15. Since that time wheat has progressed from mostly non-emerged to several leaves and in some cases near a closed canopy. With this being noted jointing is now near.

Topdress nitrogen application should be complete before jointing occurs. Currently, if your crop is progressing nicely, it is time to topdress. If it is not, rain forecasted for Tuesday and Wednesday offers another chance to revive hopes of a good wheat crop this year. Every day between April 6th and April 11 is listed as having a chance of rain. The best chance is April 6th with a 67% chance of rain. The smallest chance is April 8th with just an 8% chance of rain (Microsoft Network). Any field that already looks weak and misses rain on all these days should be considered for skipping topdress applications. Their yield potential has been greatly reduced by late germination and extended drought.

Works Cited

[Weather \(msn.com\)](http://www.msn.com)