

Digital Cameras — A New Diagnostic/Record Tool

A digital camera can be a useful tool for field scouting and record keeping. The old adage, “A picture is worth a thousand words”, still applies.

More growers are moving to electronic forms of field record systems. Any picture (print or slide) can be converted to electronic format, so it may not be absolutely necessary to buy a digital camera. Most photo labs can convert photos to electronic images, either on a diskette or a photo-CD. These images can then be attached to records, incorporated into reports for landlords, or used in other farm management situations. The images can also be transmitted via internet to others, such as a diagnostician who might help identify a field problem.

Cameras that can be used to take pictures, store the images electronically, and copy them to a computer for storage, viewing, and printing are available at prices in the range of \$500 to \$1,000. There is no film to buy or process. Many of the digital

cameras have settings for close-up images, various light adjustments, and capability to view the image immediately. This feature helps to verify, at the location, that the images are of acceptable quality. More expensive lenses or equipment may be needed for higher resolution or sharpness of image.

Images should be “backed up” just as with other electronic files. Their value may become greater as a reference for decisions in future seasons. Several views of a field situation and notes at the time of the images are recommended.

If global positioning system (GPS) service is available for the location, the coordinates should be recorded. With other tools such as a hand-held computer, useful scouting and diagnostic information can be easily stored, retrieved and transferred as needed. **BC**

Source: Dr. Harold F. Reetz, Jr., Midwest Director, PPI, Monticello, Illinois.

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