

## **The Value of Georgia Distance Diagnostics through Digital Imaging**

Benefits of DDDI over physical samples:

- digital images provide a view of ag problems closer to conditions in which the problem occurred than physical samples sent through the mail, often enabling better evaluations/ recommendations than with physical samples
- DDDI has the potential to provide much quicker diagnoses of problems than physical samples
- DDDI is Web based, available from any computer with Web access, and requires no special software on the user's computer; only a Web browser
- digital samples reduce risks of spreading certain problems through accidents during mailing, such as some diseases or insects

Benefits of DDDI over attaching problem images to personal e-mails sent to specific evaluators:

- DDDI system sample forms are set up to make it easier and quicker to accurately document client information for samples brought to agents
- since DDDI sample submission requires password-protected login, it provide great security and privacy for sensitive sample data, such as client information, which can be seen only by authorized personnel
- being Web based, each DDDI system, including all images and data, is available at any time, day or night, weekday or weekend, holiday or not, in any time zone in the world, to users of a particular system who can log in with their appropriate username and password
- the only customized software for each DDDI system is located on a computer server in our multiple-redundant, backed up, virus-protected, constantly-maintained and updated, highly secure server system
- expensive Enterprise-level program-customizing development software (Cold Fusion Server), data-storage software (Microsoft SQL Server) and graphics-handling software (Image Shark) are used to make the DDDI system extremely reliable and especially capable
- DDDI sample-submission forms provide space for detailed free-text descriptions of problems being submitted, but also require that certain specific information be entered before a sample form can be submitted, thereby making sure diagnosticians/evaluators have facts about clients and their problems that can help provide more appropriate evaluations/recommendations
- the DDDI system is programmed to direct submitted samples to a diagnostician assigned by a discipline to diagnose problems pertaining to certain crops or areas of expertise, eliminating the need for agents who submit samples to know who has appropriate expertise or assigned job responsibility for a particular problem

## **The Value of Georgia Distance Diagnostics through Digital Imaging (cont.)**

- using the forwarding feature, a DDDI evaluator who is going to be unavailable for a period of time, can forward evaluation responsibilities to a collaborating colleague, so samples don't linger undiagnosed while someone is inaccessible
- as an agro security measure, information about certain ag problems will have to be documented and submitted to other agencies, and DDDI provides such documentation and the means to quickly submit critical data to agencies such as a state Dept. of Agriculture and the National Plant Diagnostics Network
- samples submitted through DDDI are retained in an archive of images, evaluations, recommendations, comments and submitter/evaluator names, which can be used to document county and campus faculty activities, to refer back to when asked by clients, to be used as a teaching tool for agents and others and to provide an historic look at data submitted by counties when agents and/or diagnosticians are replaced
- samples prepared by agents for image capture and submitted through DDDI, provide the agent experience to enable local, in-county evaluation in the future, saving a client considerable time and giving an agent more credibility and value
- DDDI evaluations/recommendations are presented in a format that can readily be used in reports to clients

Benefits of attaching problem images to personal e-mail sent to specific diagnosticians:

- personal acquaintances may assure more rapid response to e-mail directed from certain agents to particular evaluators, than submitting through DDDI
- attaching images to a personal e-mail can require less time than submitting identical images through the DDDI system, because no extra login procedure is required and no specific information about clients or the samples themselves must accompany e-mail
- some agents may be more familiar, hence comfortable, with using an e-mail client than a Web form
- some disciplines are not rigorous about assuring rapid response to samples submitted through DDDI and certain evaluators designated by the system are too busy to respond quickly to DDDI submissions
- over time DDDI evaluator situations change, such as when people retire, but discipline coordinators often forget to reassign evaluation responsibility, so submitted samples may go without response for some time