

# INTEGRATED CROP MANAGEMENT

## Stinkhorns spotted in fields

John Holmes, extension field crop specialist, reported that farmers are finding lots of stinkhorn mushrooms in soybean fields as they harvest. These fungi do not cause disease to plants or animals, but instead live a harmless existence on dead organic matter such as crop debris. They also are commonly found on decaying mulch.

A stinkhorn begins life as an egg-like structure. As the fungus develops, it expands into a 4- to 8-inch tall mushroom-like body with a stalk and a slimy cap. The common name stinkhorn describes the putrid smell of the fungus. The odor attracts insects that then disperse the spores of the fungus on their bodies.

Common stinkhorns found in Iowa include *Mutinus caninus* and *Phallus impudicus*. *Mutinus caninus* is the stinkhorn mushroom that has been recently spotted in fields. It is about 4 inches tall and has a pinkish-red stalk with a dark slimy spore mass on the tip. *Phallus impudicus* is about 8 inches tall with a cream-colored stalk covered at the tip by slimy dark spores, with an open depression on the very top.



**Stinkhorn (*Mutinus caninus*).**

[Enlarge](#) [1]



**Stinkhorn fungi (*Mutinus caninus*) near Alleman, Iowa.**

[Enlarge](#) [2]

Some people mistake stinkhorns for morel mushrooms. While morels are considered edible and choice, one would definitely not want to eat a stinkhorn mushroom. The aroma alone would likely keep most people at a distance.

If you would like to learn more about common mushrooms in Iowa, pick up a copy of the bulletin *Mushrooms and Other Related Fungi*, available for \$1.50 from Iowa State University Extension. Ask for NCR 129.

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**Links:**

[1] <http://www.ent.iastate.edu/imagegal/fungi/mutinus.html>

[2] <http://www.ent.iastate.edu/imagegal/fungi/mutinus2.html>

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